

ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The Reminiscences of

Dorothy Lichtenstein

Columbia Center for Oral History Research

Columbia University

2015

## PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of recorded interviews with Dorothy Lichtenstein conducted by Jeanmarie Theobalds on August 20, 2014 and by Sara Sinclair on February 3, 2015. These interviews are part of the Robert Rauschenberg Oral History Project.

The reader is asked to bear in mind that s/he is reading a transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose.

Transcription: Audio Transcription Center

Session #1

Interviewee: Dorothy Lichtenstein

Location: Southampton, New York

Interviewer: Jeanmarie Theobalds

Date: August 20, 2014

Q: I'm going to introduce myself. My name is Jeanmarie Theobalds. It is August 20, 2014. We are in Southampton with Dorothy Lichtenstein. She has agreed to an oral history interview with the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation about the life and legacy of Mr. Rauschenberg. Could you introduce yourself?

Lichtenstein: I'm Dorothy Lichtenstein. I must have met Bob in the early sixties, around 1965 or so. I met him through my husband; that was a short time after I met my husband, the artist, Roy Lichtenstein.

Q: And where did you meet him?

Lichtenstein: Well, I met him in New York, probably at the [Leo] Castelli gallery, when it was at 4 East Seventy-seventh Street.

Q: Okay.

Lichtenstein: And I knew his work because I had been working in an art gallery. I had started working in an art gallery in 1963, the Bianchini Gallery [New York]. And while we didn't show Bob's work, the gallery was right around the corner from the Castelli gallery. And the Castelli

gallery was *the* place. They already had so many, well, success is a funny word to use, but well-known artists in the contemporary scene. And then Bob was a very outgoing social human being. Really loved people, loved to be around people. So he was always having people over. He didn't—at that point, he didn't have his place on Lafayette Street, but we would see him at openings and dinners or lunches, depending.

Q: So tell me about—you just touched a whole bunch of things. Leo Castelli, it's like the names you whisper.

Lichtenstein: Right.

Q: So you were around the corner from that? Working at the Bianchini Gallery? Did you go to Castelli a lot? Tell me about what it was like at that time period.

Lichtenstein: Well, there were really, there were a few galleries, a handful of galleries, the Kornblee Gallery [New York] was one. There was a gallery called Sidney Janis Gallery [New York], of course. And the other well-known gallery would have been the Green Gallery [New York] that was run by a man named [Richard] Dick Bellamy. And he showed, I think, Claes Oldenburg. And the interesting thing was, there was a lot in the air where artists, it was really just about the tail end of Abstract Expressionism. There were lots of what they called second generation Abstract Expressionists. It seemed suddenly, not just in New York, but all over, people were reintroducing the image. Either what they called Pop or *nouveau réalisme* that came from Paris. There were a lot of artists working in that mode it seemed. And Minimal art, I have

to say, also. It had a lower profile because it didn't have the appeal of being able to look at a celebrity painting by [Andy] Warhol or something that seemed outrageous at the time, by taking a comic image and making a few adjustments and turning it into a painting. So there was that kind of excitement in the air, but it was very fresh. I think artists were just happy they did not have to have a day job. That they could pay their rent and have enough food and buy art supplies. It seemed like a great achievement to not have to drive a cab or teach or be an assistant to another artist.

Q: Right.

Lichtenstein: Yes. So that was—well, the energy was really all over at that time. I think 1964, they always say that was the day the music—the year the music changed. It's just so many things were going on at the same time that we felt freer than anyone had before. When I was in college, high school and college, out of college by 1960 and things were so stiff then. Women were still wearing corsets and gloves sometimes. So it was really an open time. And it was really, people like Bob Rauschenberg, who was probably one of the first to stand for that kind of freedom. And he was a connection to the Abstract Expressionists because he thought nothing of going and joining them at the Cedar bar [Cedar Tavern, New York].

Q: Yes?

Lichtenstein: In fact, years later, he said to me, "They were all so drunk that Franz Kline asked me to drive him home!" Now Bob had a reputation as a big drinker, so that was—

[Laughter]

Lichtenstein: —but he was still young.

Q: Did you ever go to the Cedar bar? Or was that a men's hangout?

Lichtenstein: No, I never did. That was really before my time.

Q: Okay.

Lichtenstein: Yes.

Q: So you went to Beaver College?

Lichtenstein: Yes, now called Arcadia [University, Glenside, Pennsylvania]. I studied political science with a minor in art history.

Q: Oh, okay.

Lichtenstein: So I knew I had an interest in art history.

Q: So how did you end up in a gallery? What was that path?

Lichtenstein: Well I actually got married when I was pretty young. I was just about not quite twenty. And it really, it didn't last. And when I was really looking for a job—my older sister was going to law school and working at a law firm. And a friend of someone she worked for at the law firm sent me to the [Richard L.] Feigen gallery [New York]. They didn't need anyone, but Richard Feigen sent me to the Bianchini Gallery. And that was around the corner from Castelli and so I started working there in 1963.

Q: Okay.

Lichtenstein: So that was completely—the contemporary art world was pretty new to me.

Q: And what were your first thoughts when you arrived?

Lichtenstein: Well, Paul Bianchini showed a number of different things. He showed a lot of old masters drawings, but he also, he'd had—there was this chimpanzee that painted and he had an exhibition of that. And he showed people like Ronald Searle. He showed some oddball things in addition to nineteenth and early twentieth century drawings. At that point, someone started working with us, a man named Ben Birillo, and he was very involved with the contemporary art scene. He was an artist himself; he was kind of one of those I'll do, I'll try anything people. And he was very friendly with Ivan Karp, who was a director at the Castelli gallery at that time. We started working with him, so Ben Birillo was really our connection. Yes.

Q: And so tell me how you met Roy.

Lichtenstein: Well, we did an exhibition called *The American Supermarket* [1964], so actually we didn't have Rauschenberg in it, but we did have Jasper Johns, his cast beer cans [*Painted Bronze (Ale Cans)*, 1960]. And Andy. We bought a whole bunch of Campbell's soup and Andy initialed them all. And we had some real food products and anyway, when we were doing this exhibition, we thought wouldn't it be great if instead of a poster we could get Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein to do an image on a shopping bag. And it was simple times, they both agreed. And I actually met Roy when he came in to sign the shopping bags.

Q: Oh, okay.

Lichtenstein: So that was in 1964.

Q: And then from there, you dated?

Lichtenstein: From there we dated. We got married in 1968, but we were together, really from that time on.



Poster for *The American Supermarket*,  
Bianchini Gallery, New York, 1964. Museum  
of Modern Art Library Collection, New York



Roy Lichtenstein  
*Turkey Shopping Bag*, 1964  
Screenprint on shopping bag with handles  
Image: 7 1/2 x 9 inches (19.1 x 22.8 cm); sheet  
(irreg.): 19 5/16 x 16 15/16 inches (49 x 43 cm)  
Published by Bianchini Gallery, New York, printed  
by Ben Birillo, New York  
Museum of Modern Art, New York  
Gift of Jo Carole and Ronald S. Lauder  
© Estate of Roy Lichtenstein

Q: And did you stay at the gallery? How long did you stay at the gallery?

Lichtenstein: Until the gallery closed in 1968. We had moved at that time. It was really not easy to keep the gallery going in contemporary art. Even Leo Castelli, who had what we thought were the most important artists in 1969, galleries closed for the summer. Leo went off to Europe. Most contemporary galleries were closed. And even Castelli gallery, when he would come back at the end of the summer, would be kind of looking around for money, how can we pay our five hundred dollars a month stipend to the artists?

Q: Okay.

Lichtenstein: It was, financially, a very innocent and low-key time. We had moved to East Fifty-seventh Street, to a larger space. And then I guess Ben Birillo thought he and Paul would form a partnership, but it didn't work out and the gallery closed. Then I worked with an artist named [William N.] Bill Copley. He decided to not paint for a year and did a publication called *The Letter Edged in Black Press* [1968]. And although he was adopted, he was adopted by a very wealthy family. He had lived in Paris and he knew Marcel Duchamp. So we had lots of—we asked every artist we knew to do a piece for the portfolio. We did, we only branded it for one year.

Q: Okay.

Lichtenstein: And then we, Roy and I, moved, actually we came out to Southampton in the summer after we bought this house in 1970 and we never—we just stayed out here. We didn't make a decision. We let our place in the city go after about two years and we lived here year round until 1992. But we went in for openings. I remember one New Year's Eve, Bob had—I can't remember which year it was—but he had three exhibitions, one at the Castelli gallery, one at the Sonnabend Gallery, and then there was another gallery [*Rauschenberg on Greene Street: Kabal American Zephyr, Japanese Clay Works, Japanese Recreational Clayworks, 7 Characters, Chinese Summerhall*, Leo Castelli, 142 Greene Street, and Sonnabend Gallery, 112 and 136 Greene Street, 1982–83]. It was very nice because it was New Year's Eve and I remember being in the city and just seeing everyone we might not have seen, in early evening, the last day of the year. We came in a lot. And Bob had basically moved to Captiva [Florida]; I think, maybe

starting in 1968, he was living there [note: Rauschenberg purchased his property in Captiva in 1968, establishing full-time residency there in 1970].

Q: It seems like there was a little bit of an exodus from New York.

Lichtenstein: There was. I think [Jasper] Johns moved—yes, I think maybe the sixties really got to people. And a lot of the artists really did move away during the seventies. Andy bought a house in Montauk [New York], but he didn't really like it and he used to joke—he bought it with Paul Morrissey, his friend who was a film person. I guess Paul's family used to come out all the time and that's why Andy didn't want to go there. [Laughs] But people had this interest in leaving and moving away from the city, I think, maybe just to catch their breath. I really liked the city. We just stayed here somehow. We just stayed out here.

Q: So tell me about your relationship with Bob. How it grew and how—

Lichtenstein: Well, there was a period when he, Bob kind of fell out of favor. I think something that really cemented our relationship, Bob had a show of this *Revolver* series [1967] of his work. He had it at Sonnabend Gallery [New York; note: *Robert Rauschenberg: Revolvers*, Leo Castelli, New York, 1967]. Bob and his crew of people that worked with him and friends were all at the opening. And basically, I think Roy and I were the only two outsiders [laughs] that showed up at the opening.



Robert Rauschenberg  
*Revolver II*, 1967  
Silkscreen ink on five rotating Plexiglas discs in metal  
base with electric motors and control box  
78 1/4 x 77 x 24 1/2 inches (198.8 x 195.6 x 62.2 cm)  
Robert Rauschenberg Foundation

Q: What do you mean by outsiders?

Lichtenstein: Well, I meant that we weren't working or connected with Bob directly. Working with him or living with him or whatever. I think that just always somehow endeared Bob, I mean endeared us to Bob. But also, let me see, well, our son Mitchell [Lichtenstein], when he got old enough to drive, for some reason he wanted to go and visit Bob in Captiva. Bob said great. And Mitchell went, flew down there, stayed with them. Mitchell, well, he had to be over sixteen because he was able to drive. Because I remember they taught him how to drive a shift car because they had an old Volkswagen stick shift car there. That's where he learned to drive. Then in 1980 I actually went to Captiva because we knew Bob lived there. We had been to lots of—he would have events at his house, at 381 Lafayette [Street, New York].

Q: Okay.

Lichtenstein: There were some things that we were—he and Roy were really involved with. Bob was very generous and Roy was always kind of generous and they both always said yes to requests. So I think we knew him that way. So in 1980 I went to Captiva. I was actually just looking to rent a house for a few months in the winter. I looked around that whole area and I rented something on Captiva and that's when Roy came down. Well, I would see Bob when I was there. You could always just go to Bob's and you'd be invited to dinner. It was a very—



Susan Davidson, Rauschenberg, Darryl Pottorf, Dorothy Lichtenstein, David White, Hal Buckner, and Susan Ginsburg at Green Flash Restaurant, Captiva, Florida, March 2003. Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York.

Q: It was very open?

Lichtenstein: Open, very—you'd never know who would show up. There were always interesting people. I guess Bob would get up, maybe start the day late, but dinner would be late. And then he'd go back to work afterwards. He'd work all night. So of course in 1980 when Roy was there, part of what we did, we looked at real estate. We found the house I have there now. Then I was really down there a lot and saw a lot of Bob. And Roy did whenever he would come. He would come down, well, always the holidays, at Christmas and Easter. And we'd all go out to restaurants with Bob or he'd come over or we'd go over there. It was funny because he had this kind of makeshift studio he had built on all the property he was eventually able to get. But I just

remember, because they were—they were such different personalities, Roy and Bob, and Roy would say, “How can you work? The gulf air is coming in, the salt water.” I remember a Christmas when Bob’s staff bought him a violin. And Bob, he wouldn’t hesitate. He would just get up and [laughs] whether he could play or not, do it and make music. He had gotten a synthesizer. And Roy was trying to explain to him, “No, no, there are actual notes that—”

Q: Because Roy was a musician.

Lichtenstein: Well, he had an ear. He had taken clarinet lessons as a child and he could play one amazing piece of boogie-woogie on the piano. If you heard him play, you’d think this guy is great. And he would say, “No, it’s really the only piece I can play!” And it was! Roy grew up in New York City and he was kind of shy, reticent, reserved. But he had a friend who was—they both liked jazz very much. So they’d go down to Fifty-second Street and I think a big turning point—he must have been fourteen or thirteen or something like that and he heard [Charles] Charlie Parker and it just talked to him. And he didn’t—he didn’t actually get a saxophone, I bought him one for his seventieth birthday. [Laughs]

But I was taking some flute lessons from a friend out here and the thing is Roy didn’t really know what he was playing, but he could just hear something and he could pick it up and play. And so he actually became a really good student when I got him the saxophone. I got him six months of lessons with the friend who helped me pick out the instrument, a jazz musician, Hayes Greenfield. I remember at one point, Hayes said to Roy, “Look, you have a kind of talent, but if you’re not going to be serious about this, let’s stop doing lessons.” So he actually did, he was

learning to read music. He was giving it that time. If we were going out, he'd actually stop working early so that he could get in his hour of practice and his scales. It was just indicative of his personality. He really had this ability to be willing to be a beginner and go through all the hard, boring stuff. And Bob in that way was different. His work was like where he would just set up a synthesizer, "Well, I'll just compose a piece of music. And Trisha Brown, she'll make up a dance for it. She'll choreograph a dance." Yes, so, he did a lot. So when I got to Florida and saw Bob more, he asked me if I would be an honorary chair for one of Trisha's performances and one thing led to another, eventually I went on the board.

Q: Okay.

Lichtenstein: And Bob was always helping the company; as all dancers, they struggled.

Q: Right. So describe Trisha Brown.

Lichtenstein: Oh, Trisha Brown was a contemporary dancer. At that point, there was really Merce Cunningham and, I think, Trisha. Even someone like Twyla Tharp, who existed, was not quite as off-beat. And Bob and Trisha were very good friends; he made costumes, he did a lot of sets. He probably worked on some of the staging with her. And she—well, her dance, in a way, was something like Bob's artwork. There was a really great relationship there, they really understood each other's—what's the word I'm looking for—the notion of the work, her dance just spoke to Bob and his work really spoke to Trisha.



Trisha Brown and Rauschenberg working on costumes for Brown's *Set and Reset* (1983), Larry B. Wright Art Productions, New York, 1983. Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York. Photo: Terry Van Brunt

Q: And what did you see in their work that made that—in their individual work that made it come together?

Lichtenstein: Well, of course, it actually came together in many of her dances because Bob was such an integral part of it; but also her love of a certain amount of randomness and chance. Bob, if he was working—well, he was pretty specific about his work. But he was always thinking outside of the box with his work. The other way I really also got to know Bob well is that he did this show, ROCI, which you must have heard about from some people. It was something to help world peace. And he was very, very serious about it. It was the Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange [1984–91].

His original idea was to go to a country and collaborate with an artist or artists from that country. Well, that became—and then do work. That became a little difficult, but he would go to a country and take lots of photographs and meet artists and then he would organize—he would make a show for that. The first one that I went to was in Mexico City [*Rauschenberg Overseas*

*Culture Interchange: ROCI MEXICO*, Museo Rufino Tamayo Arte Contemporáneo

Internacional, 1985]. He had traveled in Mexico and his work consisted of all his own photography.



Installation view, *Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange: ROCI MEXICO*, Museo Rufino Tamayo Arte Contemporáneo Internacional, Mexico City, 1985. Work pictured: *Casino / ROCI MEXICO* (1985). Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York

Then he had a show in Cuba, which was really amazing. I got to go to—that was, I think, 1986 [note: *Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange: ROCI CUBA*, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Castillo de la Real Fuerza, and Casa de las Américas, Galería Haydée Santamaría, Havana, 1988]. I had to send my passport to the Czechoslovakian embassy in Washington [D.C.] to get a visa to go to Cuba because the United States, ridiculously, wouldn't let us go.

But the fact that Bob was able to have an exhibition in Cuba was amazing. And the artists—when his show opened there was a line, it was so long, there were artists who were really hungry to have a Westerner come, especially somebody from the United States come. And I remember—I don't know if you've interviewed his sister Janet [Begneaud, née Rauschenberg] yet, but she was there. And we just missed it. Our plane left Miami at midnight. We got to Havana at three o'clock in the morning. [Fidel] Castro had come while Bob was installing the

exhibition and his sister Janet was there. And Castro looked around at the show and they talked about fishing. He invited Bob and his, the person he was with at that time, to come and stay at his home for the weekend after the opening of the show.



Installation view, *Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange: ROCI CUBA*, Casa de las Américas, Galería Haydée Santamaría, Havana, 1988. Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York. Photo: Thomas Buehler

Q: Did this happen?

Lichtenstein: And Bob said, “Well, I have a house on Captiva and there’s great fishing there in Florida. Why don’t you come?” And Castro said, what did he say? “That’s the first invitation I’ve had in over twenty years to come to America!” But Bob and Terry [Van Brunt], they spent the weekend at Castro’s. I think they really were ready to go home, but how the heck could you say no? Especially Bob. It was just the whole idea that somehow, that we were in Cuba. It was just—so inspiring. He really put everything he had into it. He practically underwrote—he sold a lot of work that he owned to raise the money to do this. He traveled to New Guinea, he had a show in Venezuela. He was so happy when he got the Venezuelan Air Force to actually fly his work to wherever the next place was. He thought this is really something. I’ve got the air force, and they’re using their planes to transport art.

Q: That's awesome!

Lichtenstein: Yes. The person, really, to speak with, who worked very closely with him was a man named [Donald] Don Saff. Don really helped him put that exhibition together and he would really know the details, the hardships, the problems. And Bob just refused to give up. Really wanting to make that happen. People don't even realize, know about that very much, that aspect of Bob. But he said to me, "Well, I never wanted to be some kind of boutique artist, I just—" He really wanted to interact globally. And he was early at that. Now, everyone's talking about global this, global that, but at that time there was no Internet, there were no cellphones.

Q: The 24/7 TV.

Lichtenstein: No, that's right!

[Laughter]

Q: Four channels.

Lichtenstein: That's right! It's true! My uncle bought us a television set when I was about nine years old. I grew up in Brooklyn too, by the way.

Q: Oh!

Lichtenstein: And so we had the first television on our street and there were just a few programs. And our neighbors would come in to see whatever it was; *The Milton Berle Show* was something. It was a big—we'd have seats in our living room so everybody could see the television!

Q: And now everyone has their own individual one, they sit in a corner.

Lichtenstein: They—that's right!

Q: No interaction. Where did you grow up in Brooklyn?

Lichtenstein: Prospect Place between Brooklyn and New York Avenues.

Q: Rochester [Avenue] and Lincoln Place!

Lichtenstein: Oh!

Q: We're practically neighbors!

Lichtenstein: Yes. I think I was a little before your time.

Q: My family's been there fifty years.

Lichtenstein: Yes.

Q: Yes, they've been there since 1958 or something.

Lichtenstein: Right.

Q: So you're probably—

Lichtenstein: It was funny, Brooklyn Avenue on one end and New York Avenue on the other. It sort of became a metaphor as I got older and I was in high school and I was like, "I've got to get to New York! I've got to get over that bridge!" Now everyone's moving back to Brooklyn!

Q: Yes.

Lichtenstein: Yes, if they can afford it. That's—yes.

Q: So tell me about Brooklyn at that time though, that's interesting that you said getting to New York. So you kind of got there through college and then—

Lichtenstein: Yes, I had been, of course, in the city for special occasions. And certainly when relatives from out of town came, they would take us to Radio City Music Hall or we'd see the Statue of Liberty. But actually, when I think about my neighborhood now, it was wonderful. It

was like a microcosm of the world. Well it had everything. We were close to the Brooklyn Museum, there was a park right on the corner, Brower Park, and Brooklyn Children's Museum at that time. I could just leave my house and walk half a block and go in and play with the trains at the Brooklyn Children's Museum. It was really mixed—I went to public school, P.S. 138. I just sort of loved it. Even the street itself, we lived in a little, a private house. There were five of these houses that were sort of designed like English mews; they were stucco. On one side was what, at that time, seemed like the most glamorous apartment building. It was called the Pierre and it had a canopy! [Laughs]

Q: Oh, okay.

Lichtenstein: And then, an elevator!

[Laughter]

Lichtenstein: And then at the other end was this wonderful Italian limestone five-story house that this Italian family, the Parisi family, lived in. So the neighborhood was very mixed. My school was—I would say it was half African American, half white, but all mixed. Italians, Jewish people, it was just a good neighborhood. Our neighborhood was mixed like that and I think it was a good thing. I didn't realize this at the time, but looking back on it, it seems like a miniature of the world really, because there were just so many different religions. Yes. And it was funny, everybody sort of lived in, like all the Scottish people lived in one house together. There was a

Catholic church at one corner. There was an old mansion on the other corner. It would have been at the top of Prospect Place. And New York Avenue—

Q: It's a converted apartment building now.

Lichtenstein: Oh, because it was this old woman, Mrs. Brod, she actually would be sitting in her yard and we were all really frightened of her. She wore these long black clothes and high-buttoned shoes, she was really—

Q: Victorian?

[Laughter]

Lichtenstein: Leftover, sort of brought into the twentieth century in her Victorian garb. Yes. So it just seemed like a good place. And then my dad was really involved in politics. He was a lawyer. And at one point he was the secretary to the then borough president of Brooklyn. So I remember we could always get great seats behind the Dodgers, in the dugout at Ebbets Field, before they went to Los Angeles. And then eventually he became a judge. He died really young, he was forty-nine years old when he would have—this has nothing to do with Bob, but he would have been a candidate for a triple bypass, but they didn't have that at the time. I sort of look around and I see not just my artist friends, but I realize that medicine is so amazing that people live well into their eighties and even into their nineties. In relatively good shape.

Q: True. Right.

Lichtenstein: Yes.

Q: So tell me, I'm bringing you back to—

Lichtenstein: Please.

Q: Oh no, no, it's all part of it. Because I want to hear about the New York scene at that time and what brought you up, kind of your first impressions, that you said Paul Bianchini had a chimpanzee that painted in the gallery. And—

Lichtenstein: Well, he had had—these were exhibitions he had had before I started working there.

Q: Yes.

Lichtenstein: I thought they were—I would have to say that I didn't really, until this Ben Birillo that I met and—

Q: Hello, Brutus [note: Lichtenstein's dog]!

Lichtenstein: He was really the person responsible for making the connection to contemporary art for me, I think. Although I knew I wanted to be in New York, I really didn't know what it meant. I had a little apartment on Eighty-third Street. A little studio apartment. [Laughs] I had, I guess, the same feelings about New York that people around the world had at the end of World War II.

Q: Which was, for you?

Lichtenstein: This was really the place to be. This is where everything important happened. And what it was, was that a lot of artists who had been in Paris came to New York either during the war or right after the war. And I think they had an influence on the Abstract Expressionists. In the sixties, all the contemporary artists from France, from Italy, from England, they wanted to come to New York. So it just gave you that feeling that this was the place to be. Prior to that, anyone interested in art had grown up thinking you had to go to Paris.

Q: Right. Oh, that's true.

Lichtenstein: And then it became New York. Of course other places in the world weren't—other parts of the world were still too poor. China and some colonialized countries. And there wasn't enough of a middle-class to produce artists. That's sort of what I think. You have to have a certain security; a roof over your head, enough food to eat, and some sense of security before you can really start to make art. So it seemed really tiny. I can name the artists from—

Q: Please do.

Lichtenstein: Well, Arman from Paris and now, I'm going to be seventy-five so if I have to think of the names—Alain Jacquet, Martial Raysse from Paris, from England Peter Blake, people like Gerald Laing, Allen Jones. They were all just—all felt they had to be in New York. Italian artists. The German artists because Germany was still split into Eastern-Western Europe. Actually it turned out that a lot of the really interesting German artists were living in East Germany. But the German dealers came. The German dealers were very interesting, very advanced. In accepting American art. The Europeans were more accepting of this new American art than American dealers were.

I guess I was sort of wondering about that, what they saw. It represents—I guess it just represented a complete change from—and of course they were coming out of the end of the second World War so Germany and Italy were—and France was never really bombed, but Germany and Italy were really devastated and Britain. They really physically suffered from the bombing. And I guess this just looked very new. Although the term Pop art actually came from an English critic, Lawrence Alloway.

Q: Right, with Richard Hamilton.

Lichtenstein: And Richard Hamilton, so that was another interesting thing, that Richard was another of the artists that came over. And California had its own, Ed Keinholz, Larry Bell. And [Edward] Ed Ruscha, who has, is still alive and is now known worldwide.

Q: It's interesting, what I—I would like to know what you witnessed, is now, as we're talking about—we have Internet, we have phone, we have all this access to artists and communication and stuff like that.

Lichtenstein: Yes.

Q: But at that time, there wasn't that rapidity of communication.

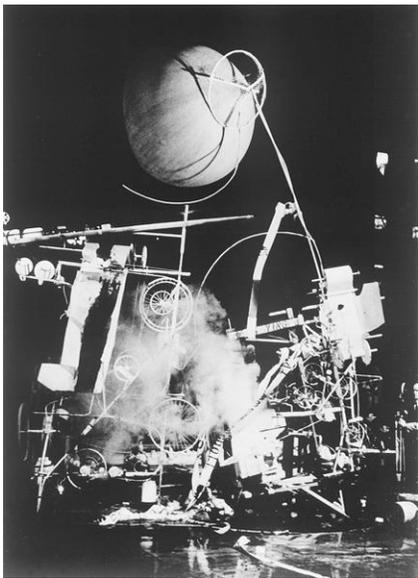
Lichtenstein: No way.

Q: How did you see that the artist's community communicated? For example, from the East Coast to the West Coast, or from Europe to you? Why would Richard Hamilton even think to come to New York? What was the—

Lichtenstein: Well, I think America seemed really promising at that time. It's just amazing. I can remember the sixties, you just thought everything's changed, everyone's changed. There was this feeling, rich, poor, class didn't matter, race didn't matter. It was this idea that underneath—it was a hippie idea really, that underneath, everybody was the same. We were all people, that there was this idea about equality. And I think how did that ever get so lost in this country? So there was great optimism really. And I think we were—I think certainly the American artists were fed ideas by the European artists coming—

Q: And how? What faction? Just—

Lichtenstein: Well, there was Jean Tinguely, who came to New York and he was really a good friend of Bob. He made a machine that would self-destruct and they had it in the Museum of Modern Art [New York] in the garden [*Homage to New York*, 1960]. And turned it on and it did. It self-destructed, burst into flames actually! It almost turned into a disaster. It was outside in the garden.



Jean Tinguely  
*Homage to New York*, March 17, 1960



Robert Rauschenberg  
*Money Thrower for Tinguely's H.T.N.Y.*, 1960  
Electric heater with gunpowder, metal springs,  
twine, and silver dollars  
6 3/4 x 22 1/2 x 4 inches (17.1 x 57.2 x 10.2 cm)  
Moderna Museet, Stockholm  
Donation 2005 from Pontus Hulten

Q: On the pavement.

Lichtenstein: But then everyone loved that there was the sense that yes, we're just breaking down these old stuffy values that—

Q: Was Bob at that opening or—

Lichtenstein: Oh, yes. I wasn't, but Bob was, it was right up Bob's alley. That made him really happy, I'm sure. He was a good friend of Tinguely.

Q: I have a sense that Rauschenberg also kind of helped the conversation—he was part of, a key in the network. Was it through his studios or was it through the openings? How was he that?

Lichtenstein: He was—it was somehow his personality. There were these evenings called Art and Technology [9 Evenings: Theatre & Engineering, 1966], where he worked with a Swedish guy named [Johan Wilhelm] Billy Klüver, who had worked for Bell Labs, and he, Billy, was a bit of an oddball so he wasn't your straight kind of tech and engineering person. When they did these Art and Technology evenings, I think Billy really helped set them up. And the ones that Roy and I went to were just—we were in the audience. But Bob was just for it, those Happenings. He seemed to be kind of an inspiration and he traveled early. He had a show in Stockholm at the Moderna Museet. And I guess I knew all this, even when we were out here in the seventies because Roy was with Castelli and Bob was with Castelli and Roy showed with Ileana Sonnabend and Bob did. There were just so many common overlays of things.

So we always knew. We would just get an announcement, not an email, of Bob's show in wherever, in Sweden, and wherever it was. And then California because a gallery person named Irving Blum came to New York. He owned the Ferus Gallery [Los Angeles] with a man named Walter [C.] Hopps. And they were showing these Los Angeles artists when he came to New

York and I guess he knew to go to Leo Castelli gallery and right away he offered Roy his first show. Roy actually had his first show at Castelli. But Irving had actually offered him a show before and Warhol and so he showed all these California artists. And we started going out to California; not just Roy, but Bob Rauschenberg worked with Gemini [G.E.L., Los Angeles]. So eventually Roy started doing graphic work with him. So we met all these artists, David Hockney was living in Los Angeles. We would just see them at openings or there would be a dinner.

Q: Yes.

Lichtenstein: In New York, what happened after an opening in the sixties was everybody usually went to Chinatown—

Q: Okay?

Lichtenstein: —because it was affordable. And there would just be a big meal and then the check would come and everybody would put their \$4.50 to pay.

Q: So about this big meal, what was the conversation? What was the name of the restaurant? Is it still there?

Lichtenstein: Oh wow, there were different ones. It was going to be oh, they have great dumplings here or this has—And then later on as SoHo developed there were more local restaurants and people were able to afford—

Q: Was it the Kitchen?

Lichtenstein: The Kitchen, yes, the Kitchen started pretty early on too. And what it did really, it was involved with performance art.

Q: Okay.

Lichtenstein: So it would have been a natural for Bob because Bob was into performance art. Really more dance and maybe more through Black Mountain [College, North Carolina]— that seemed to be a nexus where there were people who aren't as well known, like Dorothea Rockburne, but John Cage and Merce Cunningham were there. And that's really where Bob met them and they were a big influence. Because Cage—could just see him and it would have been right. It was the idea of no sound as music. It would have just appealed—somehow it must have spoken to something in Bob's soul and so he remained friendly and supportive with them.

Q: So he actually went there?

Lichtenstein: He went to Black Mountain.

Q: Okay, well, to Black Mountain.

Lichtenstein: Yes. —I digress. So the Kitchen was always in the back of my mind. But it's not something that—because I think it really was more in the seventies that the Kitchen—

Q: I guess that's true. Because Donald [“Don”] Judd was down there.

Lichtenstein: Yes.

Q: And I guess more of his crowd.

Lichtenstein: Yes, well, I think it was him because Don's wife at that time, Julie [Finch], was a dancer.

Q: Yes.

Lichtenstein: So yes. She would have had that involvement. And we lived—the last place, before we let it go, was on the corner of Bowery and Spring [Street].

Q: Really?

Lichtenstein: It was a bank building.

Q: No, not that old bank that the photographer took over!

Lichtenstein: He [Jay Maisel] was our landlord!

[Laughter]

Lichtenstein: I saw this written up—obviously it's going to be sold for a gazillion dollars and—

Q: He's never selling it, I don't think! [Laughs]

Lichtenstein: Well, he probably can't. One of the things he had was a big stock photo pile—so he used so much storage. The other person who was in that building was the artist Adolph Gottlieb.

[INTERRUPTION]

Q: Okay, so let's see. We were talking about Bob. We were still in SoHo, people leaving. Still talking about the scene around that.

Lichtenstein: Yes, that kind of energy. And one time when somebody was doing a short film on Roy and they came to Captiva, I was in Captiva. They came to interview me, but they really wanted to interview Bob.

Q: Yes?

Lichtenstein: They had asked him what the scene was sort of after the—and he was thinking and thinking and he just couldn't, maybe it was too early for him. And I said, "I think you were the scene." He was a big part of the scene. He was active very early on. He started an organization called Change [Inc. in 1970], where in an emergency, an artist, whatever, an accident, a fire, an illness, you could get some amount of money. You could just call up and you didn't have to go through an application. Most people would not be lying about being deathly ill or having had their loft burn down or something.

Q: What is this?

Lichtenstein: Change. It was great. It was just early on he was really thinking about how he could help artists in need. He had that reach—and I'm trying to think of how he got money. Because I know Jasper Johns had this foundation for the performing contemporary arts [Foundation for Contemporary Performance Arts, currently Foundation for Contemporary Arts, established with John Cage]. That was to raise money for Merce Cunningham and John Cage because they had nothing really that they could sell the way an artist could sell. There were exhibitions every Christmas, artists would either give a drawing or work and they would be plastered all over a few galleries in New York. I think I got this amazing Warhol drawing for three hundred dollars. Well that three hundred dollars was real money at that time.

Q: Yes. Yes. Yes.

Lichtenstein: At that time. I'm just not sure, but I think artists may have given Bob something to sell and so that he put part of every sale that he made into this Change so that there would be money for an artist in an emergency.

Q: Was there something that inspired that? That triggered that? That something happened to a friend or—

Lichtenstein: Probably someone needed money and they have all these rules about what you can give and how much you can give. And I think he just thought it would be something to do when an artist got into trouble. I don't really know why he started it. But obviously something made him realize there was a need for it.

Q: And so tell me more about his place. You were at Lafayette [Street].

Lichtenstein: Right. Well, shortly after he bought it, he actually lived mostly in Captiva. But it was just a great place. And he had lots of dinners and parties there. He could also work there. The bad part of it, have you seen the building? Yes.

Q: I've seen it in a picture.

Lichtenstein: It has that chapel, the Foundation.

Q: Describe it as it was when he first got there.

Lichtenstein: Well, it had been an orphanage. It was a Catholic orphanage. And the same person that found the bank on the Bowery for Jay Maisel found this for Bob. He used to joke and call himself, “Slumlord to the Artists,” a man named Jack Klein, and his business was to help artists find places. They were usually living in lofts and there would just be cold water and no shower or no bath. He would fix them up a little, actually have a shower, hot and cold running water, make them a little homier than they were. And he would usually trade, take some artists’ work for—not with everyone, but with some people, if he wanted the work. So I think he found that building for Bob. And for nothing. I can tell you that the bank building, I think the whole building cost a hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars.



Rauschenberg in the kitchen of his Lafayette Street home and studio, New York, 1968. Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York. Photo: Shunk-Kender © J. Paul Getty Trust

Q: That was good, that was serious money in 1970.

Lichtenstein: It was. It was serious money. Actually that still seems like—the money now, today, seems like funny money!

[Laughter]

Lichtenstein: Isn't it serious? When people are multi-billionaires and they can pay eighty million dollars for something.

[INTERRUPTION]

Q: Should we call it a day for today? Have you got some time tomorrow?

Lichtenstein: What do you think? You could probably work—

[END OF SESSION]

Transcription: Audio Transcription Center

Session #2

Interviewee: Dorothy Lichtenstein

Location: New York, New York

Interviewer: Sara Sinclair

Date: February 3, 2015

Q: Today is February 3, 2015 and I am Sara Sinclair with Dorothy Lichtenstein at the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation in New York City, New York. This is our second session with Mrs. Lichtenstein. Thank you very much, again, for taking the time. So today there are a number of moments in time that I want to speak about, but I also want to ask your opinion about a few things that I've been thinking about since beginning work on this project. To begin, I want to jump in, in 1979 for the 36th Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting [*Willem de Kooning, Jasper Johns, Ellsworth Kelly, Roy Lichtenstein, Robert Rauschenberg*] at the Corcoran [Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.]. Jane Livingston, the Corcoran's then-associate director, chose Willem de Kooning, Jasper Johns, Ellsworth Kelly, Roy Lichtenstein, and Bob Rauschenberg, who she identified as the *enfants terribles* of the 1950s and sixties to represent with examples of their new works, what she was saying was the best contemporary painting in America at that time, so in 1979.

Lichtenstein: Yes.

Q: There are a few things that I wanted to ask you about. I think it's interesting how we group people together, how we did then and how we continue to do so now. I was wondering if you could speak about how—Roy is more often associated with Pop, Bob is more often associated with gestural work or Abstract Expressionism—I'm interested in how they considered those

movements themselves and how they viewed their relationship to each other and each other's work.

Lichtenstein: Yes, I get your point. Well, I think grouping artists together is a convenience for critics perhaps, more than the artists. I don't really think artists like to be labeled. I can remember Bob, when he was doing ROCI, saying, "I never wanted to be some kind of boutique artist," showing in just a space here or there. So I think Bob maybe more than any of the other artists at that time really had a vision to get out of the gallery and get into the world. Well, I think every artist likes to be grouped, say, historically. I can't think of a contemporary artist that might not want to be shown along with Giotto [di Bondone] or Renaissance painters. Like Jeff Koons at Versailles.

But there is a zeitgeist at a moment where, what was really still happening around, even in 1979, just before the eighties artists came and figuration became so evident in the world. There just really was a moment in New York—not just following the war when a lot of European artists came—but the sixties and really into the seventies where artists from all over the world, if they could, wanted to come to America, primarily New York, but also to travel across the country and see what America was all about. How history will look at these things is a completely different matter because it's—by 1964, really Minimal, Pop, Color Field—they were all being done at that moment. Some didn't get as much play and that might have to do simply with what looked to be the most shocking or outrageous. But it will be interesting to see what the second half of the twentieth century—when one looks at that—I don't think they're going to separate people by decades. So that's one thing I'd like to be around to see, how that plays out.

But artists whose work doesn't really look as if they have anything in common sometimes really get along and relate to each other's work. I know that Roy and Ellsworth always had a great kinship and felt strongly about each other's work. I started working in a contemporary—well it wasn't even a contemporary art gallery at that time—1963, 1964—and Bob was already a given in the art world. He was working when the Abstract Expressionists were working and he made a kind of leap in both his actual work and his spirit as an artist and as a human being, I think. To look at the Combines [1954–64] now—he just was such an original. Categories didn't stop him. And I think that was something that was wonderful for him and he had a very positive outlook, many people have said Bob thought art could change the world for the better.

It was interesting that Jane Livingston did that exhibition because they seemed like unrelated artists, but I guess Bob was in the Venice Biennale in 1964 and won the prize. In 1966, Roy was shown, but so were Ellsworth Kelly and two other artists. Maybe [Robert] Motherwell? Again, maybe artists whose work wasn't so related to each other but who—in whatever method or style they were working—seemed to represent, at that time, the best.

Q: You said that Bob made a leap in his work but also made a leap spiritually. What did you mean?

Lichtenstein: Well, I don't mean religiously. I mean truly in spirit, that he had more than curiosity. He had an openness about him that was very welcoming for new things and I think he was that way with people. He was so open to the dance. He was so open to working 9 Evenings

with Billy Klüver, with science, with sound. He was so open to see how things could be used.

We also knew him in Florida and I can remember he would go out on rides to really funky sort of farming areas, but he was just looking for material anywhere and he found a way to incorporate almost anything from cardboard to a stuffed bird to an old piece of metal, to incorporate it into his art on a scale that hadn't been done before.

Q: I know that you ended up buying a property in Captiva. Did you spend a lot of time with Bob there?

Lichtenstein: Well, I did. I spent more time there because we had a house and it really didn't have a place that Roy could work and Roy was always amazed at how easily Bob could work. I think one of Bob's first studios that he built on Captiva was almost open to the Gulf of Mexico and Roy was really amazed by that. But Roy would come during the Christmas holidays and New Year and around Easter time, so we always saw Bob. But I was there a lot more. So I saw Bob more often. Yes.

Q: And would you visit him at his place? I hear he had lots of crazy dinner parties, was a very interesting chef.

Lichtenstein: He did. He liked to cook. There were arguments about how much hot sauce to put in the food or couldn't you just leave it on the side, let people add their own. But he was very welcoming. He liked people. He liked company. He liked that kind of gathering.

Q: Janet told me about what she called his most creative—and not in a complimentary way—dish, which was some kind of seashell soup. She said he loved the color of these shells. She couldn't remember the exact name of the shell, but she said they were pink and blue and yellow, when they were on the—

Lichtenstein: On the beach?

Q: —beach and he would collect them and they thought they'd rinsed them enough. But ultimately, they hadn't rinsed them enough. And so the soup ended up being broth with a thick layer of mud at the bottom.

Lichtenstein: Right. That sounds like Bob. [Hisachika] Sachika [Takahashi], who worked for him, told me that I could eat these little clams that—they're tiny. They're about the size of your thumbnail. He opened one up on the beach for me and I went home and gathered about five hundred of these little clams in a colander. Five hundred wasn't even a very big pile. And rinsed them and actually made spaghetti with clams. But also, Bob fished a lot and I think if they caught fish, that would be for dinner. But he always liked to cook. Even when he was finally in a wheelchair or something, he'd still be kind of describing menus or—if Darryl [R. Pottorf] was making something, Bob would be telling him what to add. Yes.

Q: Who were some of the other frequent visitors over the Captiva years?

Lichtenstein: Well, of course, [Sidney B.] Sid Felsen from Gemini. Sid and Joni [Moisant Weyl] came down a lot. [James] Jim Rosenquist came down there quite a bit. Anyone was likely to show up really, but during the week on a general basis, people that worked for him. Bradley [J. Jeffries] and Bradley's husband at the time [Emil Fray]. So that was a kind of standard basic group that would be there. And as Bob became a little more incapacitated, usually we would go to a restaurant and he could always get a table at any restaurant in Captiva. In fact the Keylime Bistro cut a special entrance for him to come in there.



Rauschenberg and crew, Beach House, Captiva, Florida, 1980s. Pictured clockwise from bottom left: Christopher Rauschenberg, Eric Holt, Bradley Jeffries, Emil Fray, Bette Vitkowsky?, Darryl Pottorf, and Robert Rauschenberg. Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York

Q: Sweet. Did Roy talk about his work? One of the things that's been interesting for me, speaking to other collaborators and studio assistants that worked with Bob, is that many people say that there wasn't a lot of conversation about the work itself, that there was this constant process of creation and not a lot of conversation or inclination to analyze the work afterwards. Was Roy similar or different in that respect?

Lichtenstein: I think Roy was similar and, in that way, I think that generation after the Abstract Expressionists were really different. We'd go to a lot of openings and there was always—if a friend had an opening—a dinner someplace with a lot of people and people really didn't get into speaking about their work that much. But Bob would work really late. He might finish dinner at midnight or one in the morning and he'd just be ready to get to work, to start working. So I think his process was to kind of really be adding things and moving around, but not analytical about it.

Q: Okay.

Lichtenstein: One funny thing. I think his staff gave him a violin one Christmas and they had given him a synthesizer or he had bought a synthesizer, and he just picked up this violin and [laughs] Roy said, "No, you don't understand. There are notes," and Bob said, "Oh well, I'm sure bound to hit one every now and then."

Q: Right. He leapt. Thinking about you—you were working in a gallery and you were very immersed in this world. Friends with, partner of, these artists. How did you look at work and respond to work when the people that you were closest to weren't necessarily interested in analyzing or discussing the work itself?

Lichtenstein: Well, even when I was working at Bianchini where I had input as to a group show, what a group show could be—I think it was really pretty visual. Although some artists do it pretty easily and they can tell you what they think they're doing, it's not really easy for all artists to do that. I know Jeff Koons is really good at describing how his work is related to organs and—

look, they wind up looking like a toy. That any three- or a four-year-old might be happy to play with. But on Jeff's part, I think he feels he has to state that because the look of the work is banal. But I think artists always think people don't really get their work.

Roy, using something as blatant as a comic strip image, always felt that—well, once he decided what the image was going to be, then it really didn't matter anymore. He didn't do it because he liked comic books. I think really what happens is that maybe artists stumble upon things. There was a story about Roy where his son said to him—because he was trying to do abstract work—you can't even really draw a picture and that he took something from a bubble gum wrapper, but it turns out that wasn't the source. And what he always said is once he had placed—even though they look very expressionist now—once he had put a kind of cartoon figure in a painting, it didn't look like art to him, but he couldn't go back and do what he had been doing. He felt he had to move forward and I would think that that was really true with Bob too. And Bob took so many photographs and then he used those photographs in his work. And not just his photographs, sometimes images from newspapers and various things. And he combined so many objects and images that you wouldn't think could relate to each other but, in the end, they did.

I remember—I was lucky enough to go to Bilbao when he had his exhibition there and he had his *1/4 Mile* painting [*The 1/4 Mile or 2 Furlong Piece*, 1981–98 included in *Robert Rauschenberg: A Retrospective*, Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, 1998–99]. I don't know if it was completely finished at that point but, when they measured and he saw that it would be contained in the room, he added a few more panels. I remember Don Saff, who was working with him on ROCI, who did a lot of work beforehand to smooth things out, said, “Oh, well there's a big Richard Serra

that the Guggenheim owns in this space. Do you want us to take it out?” And Bob said, “No.” And, in the end, with the work on the wall and the freestanding objects and pails and books, the Serra looked as if it was just part of Bob’s piece. He was always figuring out how he could just break out a little more.



Installation view, *The 1/4 Mile or 2 Furlong Piece* (1981–98) in *Robert Rauschenberg: A Retrospective*, Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, 1998–99. Also pictured is Richard Serra’s *Snake (Sugea)* (1994–1997). Photo: Erika Barahona Ede © FMGB Guggenheim Bilbao

Q: You mentioned that he drew on many, many separate images and put them together, and they weren’t things that you necessarily would have thought beforehand related to each other. Did the way that you looked at his work change as you got to know him more over the years?

Lichtenstein: Well, yes. There was a period in Bob’s work where people turned on him—maybe they thought the work was getting too mechanical. I remember he had those big pieces at Ileana’s, the—

Q: They were the clocks? The *Carnal Clocks* [1969]?



Robert Rauschenberg  
*Audition (Carnal Clock)*, 1969  
Mirrored Plexiglas and silkscreen ink on  
Plexiglas in metal frame with concealed electric  
lights and clock movement  
67 x 60 x 18 inches (170.2 x 152.4 x 45.7 cm)  
Robert Rauschenberg Foundation

Lichtenstein: —clocks. Yes. And they were beautiful. I can just remember people kind of didn't—people don't always like it when an artist changes. That's strange to say, but they didn't then. Someone like [Gerhard] Richter at this point, does things in so many different styles. People are more accepting of it. But I think that groundwork was really laid probably in the sixties.

Q: Why do you think that's changed? Why do you think people have become more tolerant of artists changing?

Lichtenstein: Oh, well I just think that we're so bombarded with images. There's a desire for things to be new. People expect to be stimulated in a new way, the art world is so global. I always thought, in the sixties, when I got involved with the contemporary art world, you could almost name all the artists in California, Chicago, New York, and those who came over from France or Paris or London. It seemed like something you could hold in your mind even if the work looked different. And I think now, there's so much more. It's a good thing that countries

like India and China that were really too poor back then, now that their standard of living has gone up can have an artist class of creators, but it's just—in a world with so much information and imagery coming at you all the time, I think it's almost sometimes hard to know what you're looking at. I think with Bob's disparate images, I think he foreshadowed that.

Q: How do you mean?

Lichtenstein: Well, he put things that weren't supposed to go together or people didn't think would work together—sometimes they were old master images, sometimes they were his own photographs, sometimes they were completely mundane objects, and I actually think people don't really understand his work that well. Maybe, when I talk about looking back at a group of work when you have a vantage point of time, people will see it, will see how modern and futuristic it was.

Q: Okay. You've just said a few things that I want to follow up on. One of them is just about longevity. Both Bob and Roy worked for their lives and they were artists who saw success in their lifetimes and who felt the impact of having some kind of new influence that they could exert. I'm wondering if you could speak a little bit about how they both carried that and what that meant to each of them?

Lichtenstein: Well, I don't think they took it that seriously. Roy always joked that he was going to wake up and he'd still be living in Oswego, New York, teaching in the snow. Well, certainly not teaching any longer. But in the nursing home and somebody would wake him up for his pills.

But I think that they often just thought this is so great. I can just spend all my time making art, working in the studio. I don't have to teach. I don't have to drive a cab. I would say, even Ellsworth Kelly, he—maybe it was the nature of his work. He didn't really have that kind of outward success. It came to him later and he's still working now, at ninety-two, and trying a few new things with his work. I think that their history and the time that they grew up freed them.

In fact, this whole idea of the starving artist—looking at it now, I always say, I think it lasted about a hundred years. It was from, say, 1860 to 1960, and I always say [Vincent] van Gogh to Andy Warhol just because Andy is a name. Even if you don't know—people know the name. And that imagery too, is really easy to flash on. Everyone recognizes Marilyn Monroe or these iconic portraits that he did. The look, you always know it's a Warhol, although it's amazing how many Warhol-like portraits I see around.

But I think after that, with the artists in the sixties starting to have some success, and it was really harder for the Minimal artists and for artists who were completely abstract. I think their work was always harder for the public, in general, to grasp or understand. So I don't think they thought of themselves—well, money wasn't really how everything was measured. That's really part of it. I remember, in the eighties, artists hit big. There were waiting lists to get work from Mary Boone, for all the artists that she showed, and they just couldn't work fast enough. And it seemed—my god—they just started out and they're already getting one hundred thousand dollars or more for an artwork. That became an expectation. I think people actually thought that—my god—you can actually become sort of rich being an artist.

But I think the older artists, who grew up during the Depression and the lean, after World War II, years. Bob was in the Navy and Roy was in the Army. And I would say artists of their generation too, that it's a different—their expectation was really very different.

Q: So how was that moment that you just described in the eighties felt, then?

Lichtenstein: Well, I remember—I think I was away. I think I was in Florida for two weeks and I came back and suddenly everything had changed and I remember we ran into Julian Schnabel. We were leaving some exhibition and Roy had seen his work and had met him and liked him. He said, “Oh, you have to come!” I think it was okay because I don't think any of the older artists that were successful felt that they were being overshadowed. It was just kind of a curiosity really, to see how the interest in these artists grew. But also, at that time we were much more aware of what was going on in Europe, even those artists who didn't come to America. I'm thinking of German artists. There is or there is going to be an exhibition of artists from all over the world—artists in Eastern Europe who really could not get out—that were working in the same genre because it was something in the air and maybe they saw a work or maybe they saw *Art in America* or *Artnews*.

At Bob's show in Cuba, the Cuban artists—they knew all about appropriation. So some information was really filtering through. It's just that these countries were really poor or cut off from the rest of—well, from the Western world. But it is interesting. I think that being free of the idea of money or how much something costs as being the measure was very freeing, very freeing.

Q: And there was a moment that that really changed?

Lichtenstein: Yes. Now, since the eighties—it keeps changing in fact. I think it really—that was one episode where things started out at maybe a hundred or a couple of hundred thousand dollars and now it seems that things are measured in millions not thousands. But I think if that's what you grow up in, if that's your peer group, if that's really what's happening, I guess it's really just the world. I read an article the other day about these high prices for artists where the artist, Wade Guyton, one of his works was going up for auction for so much money that he made two duplicates of it to consciously devalue it. That's an interesting idea. And a real statement.

Q: I just saw a headline in the paper about a new warehouse in Queens that's been designed to store art because there is such an increase in the number of people that are buying art just as an investment, with no intention of having it in their home or lending it or anything.

Lichtenstein: Yes. Obviously, people try to buy the first edition of a book. But it's sort of like saying oh, I'm going to buy this book. I won't read it, but I'm going to store it here. And I did hear once that decorators were buying—going to the rare bookshops just as a decoration really, for people's bookcases.

Q: For colors and—

Lichtenstein: Yes. And fancy bindings.

Q: Yes.

Lichtenstein: But because you can take an artwork in at a single glance, you don't need the kind of time that you do to read a book or even watch dance or do anything. You can look at it and instantly think you know it. The artist Joseph Kosuth, when he was younger, said, "Oh de Kooning. He's just a second-rate artist." The absurdity of that. But also only something somebody really young could think to say. But almost no artist working thinks of themselves as second-rate. I think I'll just make a second-rate painting. It's a very kind of weird situation now. I don't know how people keep up with it. Because I don't do it anymore, I don't know how you keep up with it because—I think if you're always looking at young artists' work and you're going to many exhibitions and you're going to art fairs and you're seeing as much as you can, you build on that.

Q: You mean keep up with an attempt to curate what's happening or—?

Lichtenstein: Yes. Or even have an idea if there is a trend, if there is a movement. It would be hard to lump a lot of people together. I guess that what you started out asking at the beginning with gestural artists or Pop artists or Color Field artists, that doesn't really exist. It's just such a broad field. One can do almost anything and it might get into a gallery or a museum, or it might not.

Q: Yes. Okay, going back to a few things that you said. You said that you thought there was a hundred-year era that was the starving artist era that maybe ended in the 1960s?

Lichtenstein: Yes.

Q: So I don't know if it's possible, but how would you then characterize the era after?

Lichtenstein: Well, I wasn't around—somebody asked me once to write a little piece for an Istanbul contemporary art fair and really that's when I started thinking about it. The church or royalty or the middle class burghers were usually the people that bought and collected art. Then there comes this idea really around 1860—looking back on it—that these artists had strayed from the mainstream. They weren't appreciated. [Paul] Cézanne and even [Henri] Matisse—well, there was World War II going on. I'm sure that took people's minds off art. But even as great as [Pablo] Picasso was, as well-known as he was and talented, and he had the global stamp of approval. People really didn't talk about the money, about what he sold this for or what he sold that for. It's really hard to think that an artist could do anything now that would look as shocking as [Édouard] Manet did to the French *académie* and decide they wouldn't put this in the show. A Manet looked so vastly different from everything that the established artists were doing. I can't imagine what that would have looked like.

I think that still happened with the Abstract Expressionists because as the people said of [Jackson] Pollock, my kid could do it. I guess when Pop then appeared, it looked like this can't

be art. But I don't think we have that nowadays. Now, it seems—well really anything can be art. Not everybody agrees on it, of course, but there's a feeling really that it's wide open.

Q: Yes. And you spoke about a shift that happened globally with an emergence of a middle class in developing countries and, obviously, that changes the global art production and also consumption. What about a shift that's happened domestically? Do you think it's partly that artists like movie stars or media stars now can be stars so there's this aspiration that's just so dominant throughout our culture that—

Lichtenstein: Maybe the aspiration is more to be famous than to actually do something great. I think they want to do the best they can in something. Domestically, though, for the art stars, there are not so many people who can actually afford to buy some of these things, so it limits the market, but people, I guess, can still have access, if they want, to prints or posters. Many people I talk to will tell me they grew up with a poster when they were kids that their parents had from an exhibition or a mailer or a print and that that had a big influence on them. So, domestically, maybe it's just living in New York and probably Chicago or California—domestically, it seems that everything, whether it's your home or the collection of art you have or whatever it is that you collect, is measured by what it cost. I think that has a flattening effect on culture in general because things aren't necessarily appreciated or celebrated for their intrinsic value, abstract as it might be, but by a price tag.

I had lunch with someone today who has a big, big contemporary collection and he said to me, "I'm not going to buy contemporary work anymore. I'm going to buy a Rembrandt [van Rijn]. I

can get a Rembrandt for \$3three million dollars. I don't have to buy thirty million dollars—" So I don't know. Maybe people will start to step back and look at things. That's really hard to know. I don't think the rest of the world is as focused on money as we are in America.

Q: You described a moment in the sixties where you felt like you could almost hold the art world. You had a sense of really knowing almost everybody. So how has the impact of the size, the expansion—how has that felt?

Lichtenstein: I think that's why they have these big art fairs because I don't think art fairs were something artists liked when they first started.

Q: No?

Lichtenstein: Well, I remember going with Roy to Basel [Switzerland] when there was just that one art fair, and he came out and said, "Oh, an artist going to an art fair is like a cow touring the slaughterhouse." Well that hadn't even scratched the surface. There's the big umbrella of [Art] Basel and it's all over the world now. But I do think it's an opportunity for people who are interested in art, galleries, museums, museum boards, the directors to go to one place and have a general idea of what's happening. I only went to Miami once for the art fair and then they had all these side art fairs and there are even more now. In a way they seem like branding—some company asked if they could use this image from one of Roy's prints for the Hong Kong art fair and it seems a little tacky, we usually always say no to things like that, but I don't know if it matters any longer.

So when you're in Miami or someplace, it's either NetJets or Swarovski crystals or—there are just all these businesses throwing events. I guess that really has to do with the fact that art is so expensive, that the people that can afford to buy it are either going to fly in their own plane or a private plane, and maybe they'll buy some jewelry while they are at it.

Q: Yes. I went to the Outsider Art Fair last weekend and I thought it was really interesting. It felt like this real microcosm, not just of New York, but of the way that people engage with art. I think there were many artists who were there because they had work or because they were looking at other peoples' work. And then, there were people like myself, who went because they just wanted to look at stuff. And then there were couples that were being escorted around by their own private advisers and it was such an interesting thing to observe.

Lichtenstein: Where was it held?

Q: West Twenty-second [Street]—I don't remember the name of the center, but it was on four floors in Chelsea [Manhattan]. Yes. Anyway, it kind of speaks to what you're describing as well.

Lichtenstein: Yes. And when you see, when you're confronted with that many images, to get back, I think—especially with Bob's transfers—in a way, he just had that many images in a work. So when I say Bob's work foreshadowed what's happened in the art world, I think I was alluding to that idea. And I think artists sometimes, maybe not even consciously, they're not thinking of that. Roy did a series of abstractions that were called *Perfect/Imperfect* paintings

[1978–95] and they were all done with one connected line and the imperfect ones missed the edge of the canvas.



Roy Lichtenstein  
*Perfect Painting*, 1978  
Oil and magna on canvas  
40 x 50 inches (101.6 x 127 cm)  
Private collection

So someone was writing about it and they asked me, “Well, did he think of this artist or that artist?” And I thought probably. But maybe not even consciously. You had shaped canvases, so this wasn’t really a shaped canvas. It was sort of a misshaped canvas. I think that there are, for artists—well, probably all creative people—that you’re so immersed in that world that you—a lot of people just say they don’t really even know why they chose to do this or that image or that they just feel—I think that’s something that’s true about creativity, that if you are open to it, it opens up to you.

So maybe Bob was one of the best examples of that. I think I told Jeanmarie [Theobalds] that, when I called Jack Cowart, the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation director—after Darryl called me when Bob died and then I called Jack and there was this minute, moment of silence, and Jack said, “It’s like losing a continent.” So actually, that’s why I think the Rauschenberg Foundation

is doing such an amazing, really amazing job, because it really has that sense of what Bob was like, what he was open to, people, places. Yes. He really exemplified that.

Q: I do want to speak to you about the Foundation. The reason that I was asking you about self-consciousness in creation is because I'm interviewing studio assistants, collaborators, critics, curators, gallerists for this project. It's become interesting for me because I think there's a desire to have people speak to meaning or to theory and sometimes the people who are really at the center of creating the work don't want to speak to that. So I feel like I'm learning something about this whole world in that way, that there are all these different players, and each of them has a different function, but what's really at the center of it—I know it's not true of all artists, I know there are plenty of artists who are very analytical—but I don't think Rauschenberg was. That's why I'm interested in that and why I was interested in speaking to you about it, because I imagine that in your work at the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation and sitting on other foundations, that it may also be something that you observe.

Lichtenstein: Well, I think what artist foundations really try to do is improve the understanding of the artists they represent and it's very hard. I can see it with Roy's work more clearly that—people, if they know the name Roy Lichtenstein, they just always think of cartoons and I would say by 1965 or '64 really, that Roy was really sort of done with that. But it's just a lingering—it's what made the impact. And that was kind of clear. It had shock value and I think that Warhol had that too, the idea that you could make a facsimile of a Brillo box or—Warhol is an artist that's probably really completely misunderstood in a certain way. He's appreciated and known,

but do people really understand the meaning or what it was or how it came about? That's really the issue.

I would say dealers are mostly interested in being able to sell the work. Museum curators are trying to make some sense or express a certain vision or part of it. I always think these small exhibitions where you concentrate on one area of work is much more interesting than a big survey, just because a survey is so difficult to deal with, to take in. It was interesting to see the Jeff Koons exhibition and the entire Whitney [Museum of American Art, New York] turned over to it and I think that was a smart thing to do in Koons's case [*Jeff Koons: A Retrospective*, 2014]. If you had that and two or three other shows going on, it would have dissipated the energy that was there. Because Jeff is always trying to explain certain aspects of his work. Where, well they say the Pop artists didn't do that, whether it was Oldenburg and Rosenquist—they just didn't really talk about their work. They just did it in their studios. They might talk to an assistant while they were working. They might do that.

It's so pervasive now that I feel like what does it actually mean to have all these images constantly. Well, when I grew up most of art, in a traditional education, had this idea that art was built on preceding art. And that's no longer really true. You might just do the same thing that somebody did but not even know that that had been done. Maybe that doesn't make any difference. What's become so important is this idea of originality, so I don't know if someone like Damien Hirst puts a whale or a cow in formaldehyde or makes an artwork out of a medicine cabinet. It is original and serious collectors own the work and it speaks to them. Maybe to some people it's just an investment and they think it will go up, but it does, actually, speak to certain

collectors. Because it's original. I think that's why they think it's going to go up in value. No one did this before, so she or he are the first people to do this and it's like saying well, why is Charlie Parker or John Coltrane or some other jazz artist, some amazing saxophone player who was there when the form was invented, why are they always more interesting than someone who's a perfect player, like Wynton Marsalis. He's perfect and he's educational and he could never miss a note, yet it might be more interesting to listen to somebody who's a little bit off.

It's like what is it in the moment of creativity that makes it unique, whereas something else is either just played beautifully or is a beautiful picture to look at? It's really hard to put one's finger on it.

Q: That intangible.

Lichtenstein: Yes. And it's, of course, not that way for everyone. Everyone hears it differently. There are people who really just love and collect photorealist art. I was in New Orleans and this couple that have collected for years, they had this exhibition of their photorealist work. It was just amazing and it spread out a little bit too. They had Chuck Close portraits in it. But here you see—this is what they loved. This is what they bought no matter what was in fashion or new movement came out.

Q: You said that the goal of foundations, generally, is to promote understanding of an artist's work and I think that's true of both of these foundations. Can you speak a little bit more about that? About what that means and also then, how you do it?

Lichtenstein: Well, we are always trying to think, can't we get somebody to look at other aspects of Roy's work? And I would say, for Bob, that he was working, living in Captiva basically and working there mostly over the last decades of his life while all these other movements were coming up with their rising stars. Bob kept connected with these other artists. Because of his dyslexia he supported the Lab School [of Washington, D.C.]. It turns out that a lot of artists suffer from dyslexia. Bob had interaction with artists that were much younger than him. There's a body of Bob's work and probably every artist has a body of work that, if they were lucky enough to have people even want to buy their work to begin with, that people are not familiar with or that's not really valued as much as it should be. So I think that's really, in a way, what needs to be shown about Bob's work. That he was working—he couldn't make a bad painting really. But maybe it was just that he was so good at it, that people—they would make remarks as it got into the nineties and things. Well, he needs an editor. But I think he just loved to work. And if he wasn't traveling or doing something else, then that's what he was doing.

So how do you get the general art-appreciating audience to look at this body of work and understand it? Maybe it's not as interesting as a Combine, but maybe it's only that there are so few Combines. Scarcity, I guess, plays a part in it, but again, scarcity plays a part in the price of what someone wants.

But I think the Rauschenberg Foundation has set certain programs in motion that are really good. They're working with universities. They're really having art students and students who are doing museum studies maybe selecting a group of work and installing it. I think that's really excellent.

It's hands on. There are people who are doing more than just looking at a slide or an image. They're actually involved with the artwork. With us, we've tried to, say, have an exhibition of work that is not a typical Lichtenstein. It's very hard to get rid of these stereotypes and archetypes that people have in their mind about people, but I do think that's the job really of a foundation.

Every foundation is a little bit different. I think we'll transition into something else long term. I think, actually, the Warhol Foundation operates in a completely different way because they sold all their Warhols and they're, in a way, operating giving grants, but the Rauschenberg Foundation is really unique because there are so many different aspects to it. So I see this Foundation in it for the long haul, not only working to get people to appreciate Bob's work but to appreciate the values that he held as a human being. Fairness, generosity, environmental problems, world peace.

Even with artist royalties. He was an early fighter for that. With certain environmental concerns and certainly Captiva and New York both. Both are not much above sea level, are really interesting places to bring these questions up. I just can't think of an artist foundation that has such a huge outreach into different areas of concern.

Q: And what do you attribute that to?

Lichtenstein: I think it's Bob. I think it's really the way he was. The fact that he had an exhibition in Cuba—it went from Mexico to Cuba because you couldn't ship anything directly.

At one point, he had a show in Venezuela and I think he got the Venezuelan Air Force to ship the work. He just loved that idea that here, these things are usually used for war and are now transporting art. I know they had a big meeting in November. I wished I could have been in Captiva to be there. They had scientists and all sorts of people discussing rising waters and climate change. That is a big thing.

The other thing is I'm sure he had fears and anxieties, but he never let them stop him. If Ted Koppel, the newscaster, was on Captiva he would visit Bob. Everyone would want to go and see Bob. He was there, they knew he was there, and I think that the [Rauschenberg] Residency is still a place where the people on the island want to go and see—they had an open house at one point because people that spend their winters on the island love the idea that there's something of interest besides the Gulf of Mexico and fish. So they like that. It makes it a richer place for them. So some people that spend a lot of time there worked on trying to get the Foundation to open up to islanders.

Q: How did you become involved with the board?

Lichtenstein: Well, I knew Bob. I wasn't on the board at first. I think they had some changes with the board, I think at the beginning. There were conflicts, like you can't be a gallery, be selling the work, and serve on the board, so there were people that might still be really nice to have on the board, but there was a conflict of interest. When I got there, everything was pretty smoothed out that way. I think maybe [Agnes] Aggie Gund had recommended me. She was on the board at one point and she got—I don't know if you've spoken to Allan Fulkerson yet, but

she picked some really good board members and then other people—it was basically Bob’s friends and community that he had on the board. But once he passed away, the Foundation really had to cross its Ts, dot all its Is. Probably Bob was just making decisions, not without discussing them, but when he was there because he had the Foundation in his lifetime. We didn’t have a foundation prior to Roy’s death.

And Bob, early on, started Change, this emergency help for artists. That was an early foundation that he created. And Jasper’s Foundation for Contemporary Performance Arts—that was really started because of John Cage and Merce Cunningham; how were they going to ever raise money to exist? So artists at least had something to sell. I sort of got off the track of where we were going.

Q: No, it’s okay. The people that I’ve spoken to at Rauschenberg have characterized you as joining the board and bringing a wealth of experience and knowledge and—

Lichtenstein: Well, that’s very nice to hear, but I tell you, being on that board—it’s been an education.

Q: Has it?

Lichtenstein: For me. Well, I think that Christy [MacLear], the director, is just pretty amazing. She knows what she doesn’t know, which I think she really is getting to know now, all the aspects of Bob. I think probably, when I came on, whatever difficulties they had, had been pretty

much worked out. And, as I say, we're such a different foundation. Our mission was to help in the understanding of Roy's art and the art of his time, and I always used to think what can we really do? We're not really grant giving, but we can support a catalogue, we can support educational things. We can give some gifts, but then we stumbled, through a series of circumstances, upon this photographic archive that was going to go up for public auction, through an appraiser that we knew.

She had come by for something and told us about this photographic archive of Harry Shunk and János [Jean] Kender, and we went to look at the work and it was as if the art of Roy's time had been handed to us. They, Shunk and Kender, were both refugees. One had been in the German army during World War II and was captured almost instantly. He was about fifteen years old. And the other was a Hungarian refugee who fled during communism and they somehow met. Wound up in Paris and worked with Yves Klein and then, after he passed away, they came to America. Their photographs are the history of art of Roy's time and that seemed like—well, here the universe has delivered this to us. And so we were able to actually hire a great archivist who put it all together. It was really too much for us to do. Jack, to his credit, was able to put together a consortium. So the Getty [Research Institute, Getty Center, Los Angeles] and the [Museum of] Modern [Art, New York] and the Tate [Modern, London] and the [Centre Georges] Pompidou [Paris] have—the Getty has a complete set and I think the Pompidou has a complete set and others have what they were more interested in. So that, in a way, we fulfilled the mission, which felt good.

I see the mission of the Rauschenberg Foundation as really ongoing. Who knows what the— what do we call it? In perpetuity. We mean twenty-five years. The twenty-five years is about as far out as you can think, but I think Rauschenberg will go on a very long time beyond.

Q: Oh, maybe this a good moment to ask you about the drawings that you donated to the Morgan [Library and Museum, New York].

Lichtenstein: Oh, the Morgan.

Q: Yes. Speaking about collections and gifts.

Lichtenstein: Well, we really didn't collect a lot, but Roy liked to collect drawings. He always thought—even if it was a Judd—even if it was just a line, you could actually see the artist's hand in drawings. So I loved the drawings we had. We had this really beautiful folded paper work of Bob's and a Rosenquist.



Robert Rauschenberg  
Untitled, 1973  
Paper collage, paint, and graphite on paper  
49 3/4 x 60 1/8 inches (126.4 x 152.7 cm)  
The Morgan Library and Museum, New York  
Gift of the Roy and Dorothy Lichtenstein Collection

We did a couple of drawings shows when I worked at Bianchini Gallery, so some things came from that. The Morgan did an exhibition of Roy's drawings and I was actually surprised [*Roy Lichtenstein: The Black-and-White Drawings, 1961–68, 2010–11*]. We think of it as a repository of the past, but some people gave gifts and what I really thought was that it would make a difference there. It's a small enough institution. They didn't have a Warhol. They didn't have a Rauschenberg. It made a significant difference at the Morgan, whereas giving them to the Modern or the Met [Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York]—they have and will continue to have. And then for smaller museums that are elsewhere, people might not see them because—in New York, people are just more likely to go to the Morgan than someplace else. I had that slight affiliation from them having done an exhibition of Roy's early black-and-white drawings. But I think the thing was it seemed like the most significant place for them to be.

Q: For them to have an impact and be seen?

Lichtenstein: Yes.

Q: Yes. And there's a show—is it this month?

Lichtenstein: Yes. I think it opens next week? That's right, of gifts that they've gotten over the last ten years [*Embracing Modernism: Ten Years of Drawing Acquisitions, 2015*].

Q: How did you decide or did you decide what you were going to include?

Lichtenstein: Well, I gave them really pretty much [laughs]—

Q: Yes.

Lichtenstein: —everything that I had. I didn't have a huge collection of drawings and we gave them some of Roy's sketchbooks, we do plan to give them the sketchbooks, all of them, eventually. Yes. I thought well, I wasn't really going to sell them and maybe one or two things I kept. I'd like to give to my children or my grandson, but things that are really good get really hard to give. You can't necessarily just afford to make a gift of everything. It seemed that maybe since the Morgan had branched into modern and contemporary, it seemed that maybe it would inspire some other people to do the same, to fill out the collection.

Q: Okay. I have to look through my notes for a minute. Oh yes, I wanted to ask you about a few specific things that Bob gave you. I think this is a silkscreened apron that he gave a few friends for Christmas one year. Do you remember that?

Lichtenstein: I don't have the apron, but I do have a T-shirt with his portrait on it.

Q: David White said Bob asked everybody who received an apron to take a photograph of themselves wearing it and to send it back.



Dorothy Lichtenstein in an apron painted and gifted by Rauschenberg, ca. 1997

Lichtenstein: But is this—this isn't me. I don't think. Is this me?

Q: Yes. Now you have no light, so you can't see.

Lichtenstein: As long as I don't—

Q: It looks like you.

Lichtenstein: Oh yes. But I—you know where I am? I'm at Bob's stove.

Q: Are you? You're in—

Lichtenstein: 381.

Q: Okay.

Lichtenstein: Yes. I was just sort of looking at the surroundings.

Q: Yes. Funny.

Lichtenstein: I think that stove must still be there.

Q: The massive stove is still there, yes.

Lichtenstein: Yes.

Q: Did Bob and Roy exchange pieces or trade art?

Lichtenstein: Well, they did. And then, of course, Bob gave us, just as Christmas presents, he always did small—

Q: I have this one [*For Dorothy 98 [Anagram (A Pun)]*, 1998]. Maybe that's what you're thinking of?

Lichtenstein: Yes, that's right. That's right. I have that hanging in Southampton. And he did—he had a Lichtenstein. I think it was sold early from his collection when they were selling other artists' work.



Robert Rauschenberg  
*For Dorothy 98 [Anagram (A Pun)]*, 1998  
Inkjet pigment transfer on polylamine  
30 3/4 x 41 1/2 inches (78.1 x 105.4 cm)  
Collection of Dorothy Lichtenstein

Q: Okay. Do you remember what the piece was like?

Lichtenstein: I think it was an enamel, could it be *Girl in Mirror* [1964] or—?

Q: Oh, okay.

Lichtenstein: It was one of the enamels.

Q: Okay.

Lichtenstein: Yes. I'm not sure which one. There were so many.

Q: Yes.

Lichtenstein: Talking about all those images.

Q: And then, I think you two also had this [Untitled, 1974].



Robert Rauschenberg  
Untitled, 1974  
Tin can and string  
4 x 3 inches (10.2 x 7.6 cm)  
Collection of Dorothy Lichtenstein

Lichtenstein: Oh yes, we have that. I still have that.

Q: Do you?

Lichtenstein: Yes, in my living room.

Q: How did you decide where that was going to live?

Lichtenstein: Well, Bob came to one of Roy's exhibitions and just— Yes, it's signed on the bottom. Initialed on the bottom. All these things have since moved on to other places.

Q: Okay.

Lichtenstein: Yes.

Q: You mentioned Cuba. Did you travel anywhere else with Bob?

Lichtenstein: Well, I went to Mexico.

Q: You did.

Lichtenstein: And then Bilbao, Spain.

Q: Was Mexico for ROCI or was that—?

Lichtenstein: It was for ROCI.

Q: Okay. Were you there for the opening? Maybe you could talk about how people responded to the show if you remember that?

Lichtenstein: Well, no, people actually really loved the show. I can remember the opening was a big party and I can remember the actor John Savage was the ambassador, the American ambassador to Mexico, and so he had some party for Bob there, but it was Cuba that was amazing. The lines just around—people were desperate, desperate to see the work. There were just incredible moments. [Richard] Dickie Landry was there, just a lone musician, playing. And of course they had a huge Eastern European writers' conference, which was very strange, seeing all these Eastern—the hotel, in the hotel dining room, it was full of Eastern Europeans. I imagine they eventually got to see the exhibition, but people just lined up forever. It was just a thrilling

moment, the whole idea that you could be in Cuba. I had to get a visa from the Czechoslovakian embassy. I had to send my passport to Washington, to the Czech embassy, to come back.

That's so nice that [Barack] Obama has finally made this declaration. It was such an absurd situation. I remember [Christopher] Chris [Rauschenberg] being in Cuba. That was great, dancing with Bob on the stage. There was a special fashion show and Bob, I think, got to spend the weekend at Castro's.

Q: Yes, they went to his country home. I interviewed Janet and Dickie Landry a couple of weeks ago and one of them was kind of laughing, saying that the country home, when you drove into this estate, there was a big sign over it that revealed that it used to be owned by the du Pont family, but it was, yes. Obviously times had changed and that was no longer the case.

Lichtenstein: I do remember—well, the one good thing, I always heard that they were just scheduled to knock down all those Spanish colonial buildings and put up Miami-style big hotels—but when Castro first sailed in and came into the country, well all young people, university people—we were thrilled. He was celebrated here and he came to New York and he was at what's now the Hyatt, but apparently some of his people actually brought live chickens with them and they moved up—they all moved up to Harlem to the Hotel Theresa. And Castro spoke at Harvard [University, Cambridge, Massachusetts]. The thing is, he had taken the American Constitution. It was one thing and then when—I guess he wanted to take over the businesses, suddenly that was a problem.

Q: It was a problem. Yes. What do you remember about Bob on that trip? How did he take all of that in? What everybody describes is just this incredible energy.

Lichtenstein: He was full of energy. I think he was just so excited. He knew that this really meant something different for Cuba, for a country that had been so isolated. Because he wanted to make a difference. And so I think he really felt that there. At one point, at the party, he was dancing on the stage with Chris and he actually kept going back and back and he disappeared, we heard this terrible crash. And then he got up and I remember thinking, I wonder how he's going to—

Q: Feel tomorrow?

Lichtenstein: —how sore he's going to feel tomorrow. But he was okay. As I said—I didn't go all over, but Cuba was very special. But I can remember in Bilbao, Darryl told me, they had all these people that worked installing the show and they were having this opening. But Bob suddenly realized that these people that had worked on putting everything together, *The 1/4 Mile*, were not invited. He said, "You have to include these people and if they don't—I'm not going to come to my opening."

Q: Wow.

Lichtenstein: And so I think they invited them. But that is the level that he thought at, really, about people—not so much in hierarchy—but—

Q: From all of my friends, I think about lessons that I learned or values that I try to borrow. Is there something like that, that you think about Bob?

Lichtenstein: Well, I do. I think his generosity in spirit was great. Roy was very much like that too. With Bob, really, just this idea of chance, that he was kind of willing to go where things took him. So that was a kind of courage on his part, not to be afraid of the unknown and to follow it. And this positive attitude that well, we'll make it better—that was really inspiring. And really, his concern for people who were less fortunate. It's sort of recognition of the fact that not every artist does well, that emergencies come up. At the time he started Change, there was really no way, if an artist got sick or had a fire or something. He thought about that. He was conscious of it. I would say that he had this global consciousness before we thought of ourselves as a global community.

Q: Interesting. Is there a particular way that you remember him? An image of him that's in your mind?

Lichtenstein: Well, always smiling and laughing.

Q: When I met Janet she has such a distinct and amazing laugh, and I keep hearing about Bob's laugh and I was wondering if it might be similar.

Lichtenstein: You're making me think I really actually—yes, I haven't seen Janet for years, but I'm glad she's well and she's—yes.

Q: Yes, she is. It was so fun. Yes and it was great to hear about the mash up that her life became. Her husband is a real regional hunter and fisherman, and their home is full of all these busts of animals. And then she has all of her Rauschenbergs and she has all these amazing stories about traveling the world with her brother and meeting kings and queens, and you can see that she's just equally at home and happy in both realities.

Lichtenstein: Yes. She did that. They were really close. Yes. Yes.

Q: I felt like I saw, maybe, something of the way that people describe Bob, that he was also very comfortable everywhere.

Lichtenstein: Yes, everywhere. A kind of spontaneity that—yes. It's an unusual thing, so maybe—someone must have told you the story—Bob would tell about when a hurricane was coming.

Q: Yes.

Lichtenstein: With the painting—

Q: Yes. Janet told it.

Lichtenstein: Yes.

Q: Yes, it was pretty amazing. So I've been thinking about the role that an oral history collection can play for a foundation and I think it is a combination of stories and memories and theory and thinking through movements and time and I was just—it's maybe a small question, but I was just wondering what you think Bob might want a collection like this to be?

Lichtenstein: Well, when you were speaking, I was just flashing on different parties and times at 381 and I just feel that, it's going to sound corny, but I just thought of the word love. That he really loved that interchange. Of course, he had some people he was very deeply involved with as he would—well when he was younger certainly. But I guess with age—I was thinking of someone like Sid Felsen. I don't know if you've met him yet, he is one of the owners of Gemini. I remember when Sid and Joni got married. I don't know, somehow we were all at Bob's at the end of the evening and I remember him saying, "Oh, don't go home. Come and stay here with me tonight," and it was—I just think that he had a kind of love for being with people that was so nourishing, so freely given. I think he'd actually be really happy. I think that he wasn't trying to be a mystery and I always think he would be so happy about what's going on in Captiva, the Residency, and I think this is what he wanted. This is what he really always spoke about and the thing is, for me, I think, oh my god, it happened so fast. It started, what, maybe two and a half or three years ago and it's as if it's been there forever. So I think that kind of spirit he had, he would want to put out to the world.

Q: It's interesting that it sounds like so much of the energy that he had in his life continues, that there's this real flow.

Lichtenstein: That's the really amazing thing—it's happening. It seems that, there he was and now there's a big—more than just a reflection of what he cared about and what he did, but an actual kind of recreation of it with a new generation.

Q: All right, well, thank you very much.

Lichtenstein: Yes, yes. Great.

Q: Yes, if there's nothing else that you want to say, then I think—

Lichtenstein: I think that's good. I'll probably remember some things.

Q: That always happens.

Lichtenstein: Yes.

Q: Well, thank you. This was really wonderful.

Lichtenstein: Great, great.

[END OF INTERVIEW]