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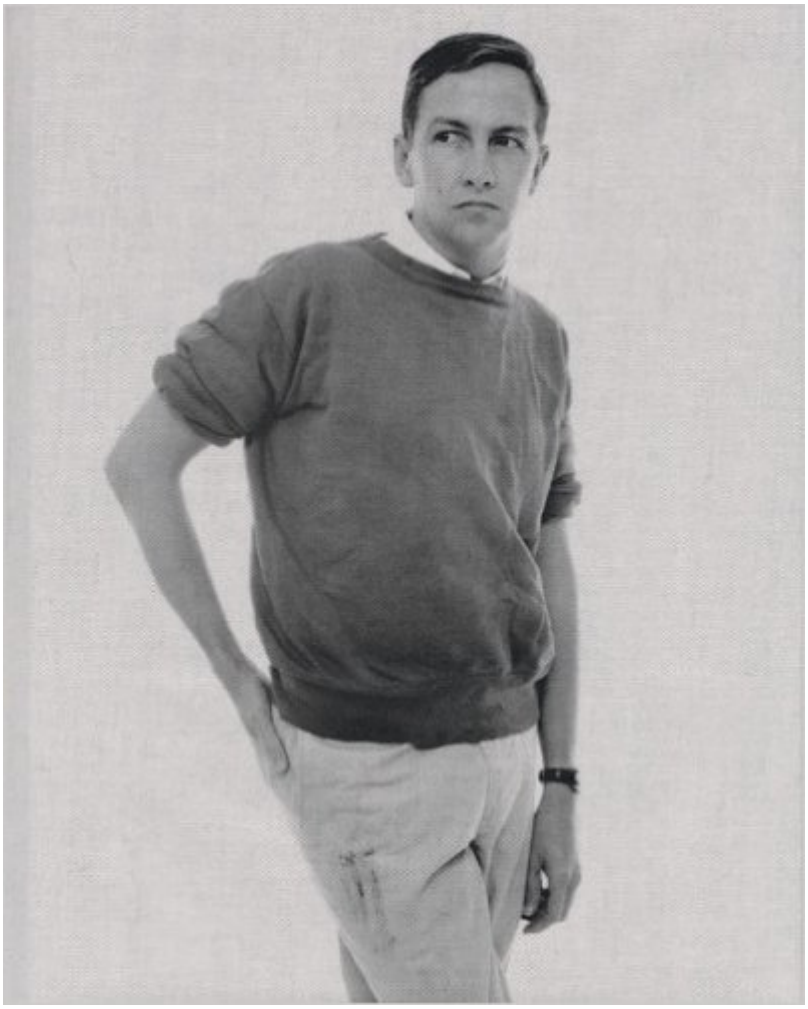
Robert Rauschenberg: Combines



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Synopsis

Poetic and lush, Robert Rauschenberg's Combines present layers of complex and sometimes conflicting information. This approach, first explored by Rauschenberg in the early 1950s, proved prescient and has become increasingly relevant in the current age of cascading information, when even the most ground-breaking artists are referencing and sampling disparate elements to create new forms. The Combines suggest the fragility of definitions, the fluidity of materials and the complexity of forms that are characteristic of Rauschenberg's works. The artist's handling of materials provides a precise physical evolutionary link between the painterly qualities of Abstract Expressionism and iconographical, subject-driven early Pop art. This book focuses on the works created roughly between 1954 and 1964, the most important decade in the artist's 50-year career, and constitutes the most complete survey of the Combines ever presented, as well as the most rigorous analysis of their political, social, autobiographical and aesthetic significance. An introductory essay by exhibition curator Paul Schimmel titled â œReading Rauschenbergâ • offers an iconographic analysis of the earlier Combines, based on in-depth conversations with the artist. Other texts help to contextualize the Combines, such as Thomas Crow's essay that calls them the major artistic statement of their time, and the one body of art that could simultaneously hold its own from de Kooning to Pop art.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book is a catalogue for current exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and then the Museum of Contemporary Art, LA, and in Europe at the Pompidou Center, Paris and the

Moderna Museet, Stockholm.As installed at the Metropolitan Museum of art, the show is stunning. It’s astonishing that this exhibit is the first time these works from the 1950’s have been shown together. These "combines" -- art somewhere between painting, collage, and sculpture -- are a foundation of modern art, so much so that art of the second half of the century is hardly conceivable without them. This makes looking at the work afresh more difficult than usual, since seeing these pieces together in 2006 means also viewing through a legacy and school of influence.But what phenomenal pieces they are! You can see Rauschenberg gobbling down visual techniques whole - collage, assemblage, juxtaposing printed images, materials, sculpture. They are daringly junky and breathtakingly beautiful. I have know idea whether you’d call this conceptual art, or the most luscious, messy opposite of conceptual art you’ve ever seen. The works are fearlessness. Really inspiring.The catalogue has excellent reproductions, and the photography is quite good at conveying the depth of the pieces - some of the works are presented from several angles so the more sculptural pieces are well conveyed.

ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG: COMBIINES is the name of an exhibition currently on display and one garnering some of the warmest acceptance by both critics and public alike of any retrospective survey in years. Not that Rauschenberg is a ’discovery’ unearthed by this generous volume: there have been many excellent monographs and catalogues printed about this extraordinarily gifted artist who for the past half century has been creating art from found and constructed objects.Rauschenberg’s art has always had secondary messages - political, anti-war, ethnic, sexual, and ecological statements - housed in the fascinatingly complex assemblages that are part of the collections of the major museums around the world. This fine book limits its survey to the prescient years 1954 to 1964, that period during which Rauschenberg became well known and highly respected for his art and beliefs. Curator Paul Schimmel writes a fine essay about this period and accompanies his own perceptions with those garnered from a very informative shared conversation with Rauschenberg himself. Likewise Thomas Crow writes an immensely readable chapter on just how Rauschenberg came in this realm of artistic expression and from Crow’s writing we learn much about the mid-century changes in American art.The reproductions of the art works are excellent and if there aren’t as many images as one would wish, it is because of the self-imposed limited time frame in Rauschenberg’s career of the exhibition. A fine volume, highly recommended for all art history majors and for those under the spell of this great artist. Grady Harp, February 06

Take an in-depth look at Robert Rauschenberg’s combines, beautifully illustrated and documented. I am pleased with the overall quality of the edition and impressed with the thoughtful, generous and lush way the material is treated.

Living in a place where its rare to see an original Rauschenberg combine, this book has standout photgraphs of the works, with detailed views to complement the full image- the first two essays also provide some keen insights into the processes and influences on Rauschenberg’s life and work. Definitely recommend for artistsor interested art followers. These works constitute what I think were the finest in his career.

I loved the book. It is one of my favorite art books, exciting and inspiring.It was in excellent condition! I had to wait a long time to get it new, but it was worth it, andwas at a used book price.

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