



Rauschenberg: Art and Life

Mary Lynn Kotz

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Iconoclastic, generous, inventive, impulsive, sensitive, gregarious, prodigious, always amazing - these are just some of the words to describe Robert Rauschenberg and the art he has been making for the past 40 years. In this book - the only fully illustrated account of his life prepared with his full cooperation - we come face to face with Rauschenberg, one of the towering artists of the twentieth century.

The reader travels along the crazy odyssey that is Rauschenberg's life, beginning with his childhood in the oil town of Port Arthur, Texas, his unhappy experience in the navy, and his eventual decision to pursue a life in art. We follow him to Black Mountain College, where he studies under the stern but brilliant Josef Albers, and becomes friendly with Merce Cunningham and John Cage; to New York and classes at the Art Students League; We are told of his early marriage to Susan Weil, his friendships with Jasper Johns, Cy Twombly, and encouragement from dealers Betty Parsons, Leo Castelli, and Ileana Sonnabend; and of roundtable drinking sessions with such artists as De Kooning and Pollock at the legendary Cedar Tavern in Greenwich village.

We experience the astonishing dexterity and range of Rauschenberg even as an emerging artist, with his forays into set and costume designs for such dance masters as Paul Taylor, Merce Cunningham, Trisha Brown; the creation of his now-famous combines (among them "Bed" and "Monogram"); and his eagerness to bridge technology and art, with the help of scientist Billy Kluver and others. In short, there seems to be no artistic medium or form that has escaped Rauschenberg's grasp.

In preparing this highly readable book, the author interviewed just about everybody who has been important to Rauschenberg over the course of some six decades. Fresh anecdotes complement those already familiar to Rauschenberg followers, and new contributions from the artist further personalize and update this biography.

With 200 illustrations - 92 in full color - "Rauschenberg / Art and Life" is a richly impressive portrait of the artist. In addition to the scores of works of art reproduced (paintings, combines, floor and wall constructions, prints made at U.L.A.E., and more), and personal photographs of Rauschenberg and his friends and family, creating in sum an intimate portrait of this living legend. A special feature of the book are the many reproductions, for the first time, of his most recent and significant work - ROCI (Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange) - a continually evolving body of work developed and exhibited in countries all over the world.

From the age of 38 when he received the grand prize at the Venice Biennale in 1964, Rauschenberg has proved himself to be a pivotal figure in the art of our time, in "Rauschenberg / Art and Life, the story of this joy-filled, adventurous artist is wonderfully told.

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