

ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The Reminiscences of

Laddie John Dill

Columbia Center for Oral History Research

Columbia University

2016

## PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Laddie John Dill conducted by Cameron Vanderscoff on March 11, 2016. This interview is 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: Laddie John Dill

Location: New York, New York

Interviewer: Cameron Vanderscoff

Date: March 11, 2016

Q: It's Friday the 11th of March. It's the beginning of spring apparently, at least here in New York, here in Manhattan. And this is Cameron Vanderscoff, here for the Rauschenberg Oral History Project with Laddie John Dill. So you did an interview with the [Robert Rauschenberg] Foundation four years ago ["Interview with Laddie John Dill," Interview with Rauschenberg Collaborators and Friends, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, 2011].

Dill: I did.

Q: Something like this, yes. And so I've—

Dill: Did I do it over the phone? Or did I—

Q: I don't know, I would imagine not, but—

Dill: Oh my god.

Q: It's possible. So there are some things in there and we'll try not to double the content too much, but—

Dill: Okay so you're probably more familiar with this document than I am.

Q: [Laughs] Well that's fine. Because actually there are questions left from that.

Dill: Yes.

Q: I know you were born in Long Beach [California].

Dill: That doesn't mean anything though. [Laughs]

Q: Yes. So where were you raised?

Dill: I was raised in Malibu [California]. My father was an actor—not a famous actor. This is in the late forties, early fifties. He worked for Paramount [Pictures, Los Angeles]. And in those days you—completely different system. It wasn't through agents or anything like that. You actually were a company man. It would be like working for Lockheed [Martin]. We lived close by. I was in kindergarten. But I remember we lived on St. Andrew's Place and Melrose [Avenue], which was right around the corner from Paramount. And Paramount was more of a family, as I remember it, a family situation, like we would take snow trips and all that as part of the Paramount family thing.

So he would just show up to work and today you're going to be an irate sheepherder. They also, in those days, were churning out black-and-white westerns. And so he was in a lot of those and *I Shot Jesse James* [1949] and all that kind of stuff. We lived up on Beachwood Drive [Los Angeles], which was just very rural in those days. Now it's kind of a famous little strip. And lived next to a guy who kind of reminded me of Rauschenberg too. His name was Harry Carey. And Harry Carey, Jr. became quite a well-known guy, but Harry Carey, Sr. was also an actor. And he lived in a rock house next door to us with all these artifacts, real guns, and I actually saw a real hand grenade, that kind of thing.

So anyway, then my parents divorced. And my mother pretty much raised us and decided she didn't want to raise us in the city so moved out to Malibu in the early fifties, '51 or '52 or something. And way up in the hills so it was super rural. And she married this guy Jim Dill—we took over his name. And he was a—how can I explain him? When he was in World War II, he worked for the OSS [Office of Strategic Services]. And he was also a member of Glenn Miller's band [Glenn Miller Orchestra]. And then when the war was over, he stayed in Germany, he was still working for whatever information or intelligence I guess would be the best word for it. He was very apolitical—I'm just talking about my stepfather. But at the same time he must have had a very high IQ because he was a musician and he was a sought-after mathematician. And he was one of the developers of night vision, the green—the green you see—

Q: Yes, like infrared kind of stuff?

Dill: Not infrared, but actually what this does, it takes light particles and enhances them about a thousand times. So you're actually seeing in the dark, midnight. But it also had a thing where if you looked at a lightbulb, it didn't blind you. So it was all in this computer thing. And I remember wearing the prototype on it, this funky thing and you could actually see in the dark. The reason I'm mentioning that is because with my work, it always has a technological aspect to it. And I think that's definitely due to my stepfather. Even today I'm making pieces that have—it's like electricity 101 almost. But then there are other elements that take a kind of scientific method to figure them out.

And I think that's one of the reasons that Bob and I got along so well. Because I met Bob in 1968. He was working at Gemini [G.E.L., Los Angeles] and I was working on some prints of Jasper Johns's. I wasn't printing them; I was sponging at that time. But I really wanted to work in the three-dimensional thing.

Q: So you're at Gemini at this time.

Dill: Yes, let me clarify it.

Q: If you could connect the dots between coming up with your stepfather, getting interested in technology, to how you became an artist.

Dill: Yes. We grew up with laser beams running down the hall. And don't touch that or you'll die—that kind of thing.

[Laughter]

Dill: Things that actually I work with now. So I graduated from Chouinard Art school [Chouinard Art Institute, Los Angeles], which is now CalArts [California Institute of the Arts]. But I needed a job. So I went to this friend of mine, Elsa Rady. She was a friend who was a really well-known ceramicist in L.A. at the time—R-A-D-Y. And I went over there and we would just kind of hang out. And then I mentioned, “Boy, I’ve got to find a job.” So she said, “I’m really close to [Sidney B.] Sid Felsen. And I’ll call over for you and then you can go over there and talk to him.” And so she made the call right there. And she said, “Yes, he’ll see you in the next fifteen minutes or so.”

She was living in West Hollywood, so it wasn’t very far away. And Gemini was further in on Melrose then. And so I got over there and talked to Sid and he gave me the job. And so I started working. At that time they were making Claes Oldenburgs so I got—and I had a very basic idea about lithography. I wasn’t a trained lithographer or anything like that.

Q: So what was your background then at Chouinard?

Dill: At Chouinard, painting—painting and sculpture. Nothing technological at that time. And then I was lucky enough to find a studio in downtown Los Angeles right after Chouinard. We’re talking about late sixties, ’68. And it was huge, it was 10,000 square feet, it was \$149 a month.

[To interviewer] Born too late.

[Laughter]

Dill: So I worked down there and then when I got the job at Gemini, I would just go to Gemini, commute, which was in West Hollywood and I was in downtown L.A. Then through Gemini I worked for Oldenburg and I worked for Jasper quite a bit. The *Color Numeral* series [1968–69], I worked with those. And then I got pretty close to Jasper. We got to know each other pretty well.

Then I got to know Bob. And he asked me—he came to my studio, I remember he came down, and I was sharing it with Charles [“Chuck” Arthur] Arnoldi. And he saw these lights—I was doing neon with sand.

Q: Do you remember the first time that you met Bob in particular?

Dill: Yes, I met Bob at Gemini. He walked in and he was in town and he was going to be the next artist. And the thing that Gemini did was they had quite a large space. But whenever an artist would come in, there would be no trace of any other artist. So we had to completely clear the decks. And Oldenburg was the worst though. He even expected us to use these special pushpins that are T-shaped. Like all the normal pushpins had to be removed: no sign of Jasper, no sign of Bob, that kind of thing. So we were kind of clearing up and Bob walked in. And we shook hands. He was strictly business because he was getting involved in this project. He took it



very seriously obviously. His persona on the outside was always happy-go-lucky, let's go have a drink, that kind of thing. But when he worked, he was really solidly into it.

Q: And so Bob walks in—

Dill: Bob walks in.

Q: Yes, what did the name or the art of Bob Rauschenberg mean?

Dill: Well, my god, Bob Rauschenberg, you know? I was a fairly astute person knowing a lot about contemporary art. And I had a great art history program that they had at Chouinard. The two art history teachers were Philip Leider and John Coplans. And Philip Leider, you know who he is, right?

Q: Yes.

Dill: Our class consisted of ten people. It was eight o'clock in the morning and Mr. Leider would present very dramatically, like the Venus of Willendorf [ca. 28,000–25,000 BCE], that kind of thing. He did the same thing to twenty-five hundred people at [University of California] Berkeley when he went up to Berkeley. So from a class of ten at Chouinard he was lecturing to twenty-five hundred people up in Berkeley. So we had a really nice situation. And Coplans was pretty good too; Coplans took it from post-Renaissance on up. Again the classes were almost like one on one; there were five to ten students in each class. So it was a nice experience.

So I knew about Bob Rauschenberg of course, but I kept it pretty cool— “Oh my god, you’re Bob Rauschenberg,” that kind of thing, I didn’t do that. And he came to the studio and visited Chuck and me. I introduced him to Chuck. And I had this huge amount of sand in my studio, like 7,000 pounds of it.

Q: Where did you get it from?

Dill: I’d buy it from building supplies, places like that. It’s the kind of thing you do when you’re really in your early, mid-twenties. I would take two sacks of hundred-pound and run them up—it was an upstairs walkup. And somehow I got 7,000 pounds of sand into this room. And for all I knew, it could have collapsed. It was an old building. And then I was playing with my neon tubes—I had all these neon tubes made up. [Robert] Bob Irwin turned me on to this guy. You’ve got to remember it was a much smaller scene then. It’s like a tenth of what it is now at least. So you got to know these guys.

So Irwin turned me on to the neon guy and I was doing these neon pieces. And Bob was in town and he asked if he could come by the studio. And what do you—you don’t say no. [Laughs] And he came by and saw these pieces and then he turned to me and said, “Would you like to do a collaboration?” And again, you don’t say no. And we found this place up in Baldwin Hills [Los Angeles] that was flat and it overlooked the city, a big lot. So we each did light pieces. And what I did was, I bored holes in the ground about 6 feet deep and then wired out just straight neon tube, one neon tube—like a red or a blue that was very bright. And you didn’t see the tube, but

what you saw were lozenges of color on the ground. It's like footprints or something. They were round holes that we dug with a professional hole-digger thing.

And then Bob got—you know those old-fashioned Klieg lights they used to use? And they looked kind of like Martians—what we called Martians. They had a huge head and then these stick legs and they used to physically move them around like this—no motor or anything. And he got two of them together about 4 inches apart and turned them on full blast. So they're facing each other and the light would just streak out of them. And it looked like these two people having an intense conversation. From my point of view, he blew me out of the water.

[Laughter]

Dill: So then he calls me a couple of weeks later and he says—

Q: So before we go into that, I have a couple of questions about that actually.

Dill: Yes?

Q: Is that *Light Show*? What was that whole—because—

Dill: It was called—I don't know what we called it. *Light Show*? I don't know. [Note: *Group Light Show*, 1970]

Q: Because [Robert] Bob Petersen actually talks about this in his— [“The Reminiscences of Robert Petersen,” 2015. *Robert Rauschenberg Oral History Project*. Conducted in collaboration with INCITE/Columbia Center for Oral History Research. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives]

Dill: Bob was involved in it, yes. I think he was with Bob then.

Q: Yes, I think so. And actually the reason I ask that is because—so Bob Petersen has a memory of you wanting two search lights and “he”—he being you—“got two search lights and parked them beside each other on this dirt lot in the Baldwin Hills and just beamed them together.”

Dill: Yes.

Q: So he remembers you doing that, but you’re saying Bob was actually the one.

Dill: Bob did it.

Q: Because then he also remembers Bob putting flashlights in holes at the ground at this same thing. And I don’t know whether—

Dill: No, I don’t remember that part. This was—no, there were neon tubes in the holes in the ground. Those were mine. Mine worked pretty good, but Bob’s was spectacular. And the thing about it—I think this has a lot to do with his aesthetics at the time—it was so easy. It was just so

simple and logical. And I always thought Bob made art look easy because it just came naturally to him. Not easy for anybody else to do, but there's kind of a flow to it. I've always admired just the way he would just put things together. And did you ever notice his hands? Did you know him when he was alive?

Q: No, I didn't.

Dill: Oh, he had interesting hands. They were double-jointed, so he had a thumb that could go way back like that. And he was always on, hands on, that kind of stuff. So he had these really interesting hands that could do things. I used to stare at his hands while he was working.

Anyway, so Bob—

Q: Pardon me for interrupting, so one last question about this light show is that Bob Petersen has this memory of it slowing down traffic on the Santa Monica Freeway, this event that he's remembering—

Dill: It might have.

Q: —because people were stopping, looking up at the hills, where you all were having this whole—

Dill: Oh no, it shot across the town. It shot off that vacant lot. And yes, maybe it did. It never occurred to me, being my age. [Laughs]

Q: He said the cops showed up. [Laughs]

Dill: Yes, they might have. I don't remember that part. They might have. "What are you doing here?"

Q: Well maybe the follow-up question is, maybe because—

Dill: And Sid came in—Sid would take care of everything.

Q: How so? So Sid would—

Dill: "Hey Sid, they're not going to let us—" That kind of thing. Sid would walk over—have you met Sid?

Q: I have not.

Dill: Oh, you're in for a treat.

Q: Yes?

Dill: Yes. He's ninety-five years old or ninety and he still works every day. He's quite a character, Sid Felsen.

Q: Yes, I admire that. So you were saying a couple of weeks after this light show collaboration—

Dill: Yes, a couple weeks later Bob called me. And I was working in the studio and he said, “Well, I guess you’re probably waiting to see if we’re going to do another collaboration or installation.” I said, “Yes, I can’t wait, that was great.” He says, “Well, I’ve been thinking it over,” he said, “These things are really cool to do and I’d love to do more. But I don’t think it’s doing anything for your exposure because—” He was very realistic. He alluded to the fact that if he does something, a bunch of people are going to look at it, where if I did something, nobody was going to look at it. Nobody knew who I was. And he says, “I’m going to do you one better.” He said, “There’s an Andy Warhol show [*Andy Warhol*, 1970] at the Pasadena Art Museum [note: now the Norton Simon Museum] coming up and everyone who handles avant-garde work is going to be in town and I’d like to introduce you to my dealer.” And so he brought, let’s see, Rosamund Felsen was very active in the art community, Sid’s ex-wife—and still is actually—and Ileana Sonnabend, Michael Sonnabend, and I think Leo Castelli, but I’m not sure. And he brought them all over to the studio.

Q: Your studio?

Dill: Yes. And they were there for, I don’t know, half an hour at the most and they said, “We’d like to show your work.” I remember Bob was just kind of—well I was kind of blown away. Plus I had six dollars to my name. And I was thinking maybe I should deal drugs or something, anything. [Laughs] And then these guys show up. And I remember Michael Sonnabend saying,

“Do you need money?” I said, “Well, I could use the rent money this month.” So he said, “Just call Judith.” She ran the gallery in New York [Sonnabend Gallery]. And they were up on Seventy-fourth [Street] and Madison [Avenue] at the time. SoHo hadn’t started yet.

Q: Right, because that’s—

Dill: That was a year later.

[INTERRUPTION]

Q: All right. So do you have a sense of what—or did Bob ever say what he saw in you or in your work that he made the introduction to Ileana—

Dill: He used to like the experimental aspect of it. I said to him, “What am I going to do?” I said, “You know this sand, it’s totally ephemeral.” He says, “So what? It’s so sensual,” that kind of thing. He didn’t have to talk me into it, but he was so positive about it. And I think he was that way with a lot of people because he had an awful lot of people that really liked him.

Anyway, he set me up with Ileana. But then not only that—when I had the show he was completely behind it.

Q: The show out here in New York? The Sonnabend show [solo exhibition, 1971]?



Dill: Yes. He didn't just leave town or whatever. But when I came to town the Sonnabends said, "Why don't you ship us some of the—" These are light pieces that I did. And he said, "Why don't you send some to our warehouse up on 108th [Street] and Amsterdam [Avenue] and come out and set them up and we'll see how they look in New York." So I came out, it's the first time I'd ever been in New York. And it was February and it was 5 feet of snow and the city was just roaring. So I was with Jan Webb who was at one time married to one of the master printers at Gemini—so very incestuous scene here.

Anyway, Mark di Suvero came over to my studio and I think he had heard about, through Bob or something, that I had some interesting work. So he came over with Barbara Haskell who's over at the Whitney [Museum of American Art, New York] now. Anyway Barbara Haskell and I knew each other. She was twenty-three years old when she was running the Pasadena Art Museum. And she put together Bob's show and everything [*Robert Rauschenberg*, 1970]. So she came over with Mark di Suvero and Mark bought one of my pieces for her. They were like \$1,500 or something like that or not even.

Q: Had you sold many pieces at this time?

Dill: No, that was the first one I ever sold. And—

Q: So what was that feeling, then?

Dill: Oh, it was great.

Q: Someone wanted to buy your art.

Dill: Well, yes. And then he said, “We’ll figure it out later,” and we went and we got something to eat. And then he was working on a sculpture out at the Pasadena Art Museum as well, Mark was. And so I went over to where Mark was working in Pasadena and I said, “Hey, do you need any help? I need a job.” And this is pre-Gemini. He came down off the ladder, he says, “No, I work alone.” With that bad leg and everything. He would strap himself to the top of the thing. He said, “But I really want to buy one of those light pieces.” And he hands me a wad of cash. And he said, “I don’t know how much is there, but I’ll make it up to you if it’s not enough.” So I actually had money for the first time.

Then the Gemini thing and then—oh no, no. I’ve got it backwards. I’m sorry—it’s my memory. It came after Rauschenberg, yes—Mark [buying my piece] came after that whole Gemini thing, because then [after that] I was trying to figure out where I was going to stay [in New York City]. And he said, “I’ve got a key. I’ll give you an extra key and you can stay at my place.” So we got there and it was middle of winter. Remember, no cellphones. And it was freezing and there was a blizzard going on. And we got in this phone booth—oh, first we went to Mark’s. And to get up into Mark’s studio you had to climb a rope to the second story. Not a rope ladder, but a rope. And long story short, Jan, who I was with at the time, just goes, “I’m not staying here. It’s freezing!” And he built all these huge sculptures that you’d have to buy the building, tear it down to get them out. And I think that’s what he did later on. Anyway, it was—I would have stayed in a second. But it was raw, really super raw.

So I said, “Okay, what are we going to do now?” And I said, “I only know two people in New York right now really well enough to ask them if there’s any places that they might know of,” and one of them was Jasper. So we’re in the phone booth and we call Jasper’s number and his secretary answers. And she says, “Well, I’m afraid Jasper is not here. He’s down in South Carolina. He’ll be back in about three weeks, but let me give him a call. He might have an idea.” So we waited in the phone booth and about ten minutes later we get a call back and she said, “Why don’t you come by the office,” she gave us the address, “and I’ll give you a key to his studio. He said just stay there.” So we went over, got the key, went over to the studio on Essex [Street] and Houston [Street], the old bank building. And we’re totally blown away when we walked in. He had this huge Dymaxion map he was working on [*Map (Based on Buckminster Fuller’s Dymaxion Airocean World)*, 1967–71].

And I mention all of this because these are the kind of things you do when you’re naïve enough, you’re young enough and naïve enough to do it. If you were forty, you wouldn’t do this in a million years.

Q: Like cold-call Jasper Johns?

Dill: Yes, exactly. You wouldn’t have the nerve. And we weren’t nervous or nervy about it—it just seemed natural. So we stayed there for a couple of months. And Jasper came back and he said, “Just stay.” And he’d have these little soirees at five o’clock in the afternoon and these guys loved to drink. And so his buddies would come over. His buddies consisted of John Cage,

Merce Cunningham, [R.] Buckminster Fuller, I think it was Elaine de Kooning, and some guy from the Greenville County Museum of Art [South Carolina], which Jasper single-handedly sponsored. And so I would sit around these guys—just sitting next to John Cage can be daunting.

Q: How so?

Dill: So I'm thinking, what can I say to this guy? How can I communicate with this guy? Because I knew all about him. And finally, he was a chain smoker so I bummed a cigarette off of him, which started a conversation. Yes?

Q: Well, so you really have this foundation with these people. And you met Jasper of course at Gemini. And I just want to be sure before we go much further, one of the interests of this project is—of course Bob did a lot of collaborations with Gemini over the years.

Dill: Yes.

Q: And since you clearly formed these strong relationships with Jasper and with Bob, I'm wondering if you could comment about the working atmosphere at Gemini? What it was like to work with, what your routines were.

Dill: Okay.

Q: And then I have one or two follow-ups on that.

Dill: I would go in and then it was always—it was really strictly business. The kind of prints we did had never been made before. So it was an experimental atmosphere and that means you had to hire people that were ready to go for it. And very soon I moved out of working with [James] Jim Webb—who was an amazing printer at the time—on these colored Jasper Johns numbers. I remember particularly the seven and working on that for quite a long time. And then [Kenneth E.] Ken Tyler, who was the master printer at the time, took me off of that after we had finished it.

And they got into this thing about making lead reliefs and worked out a lot of bugs with that. We had to have a male and a female mold out of stainless steel—it was very expensive and everything. And we'd take sheet lead and you had to seed it down into the negative plate and then put the positive plate over it just before it was pressed. And you had to know the image in your head, so you felt it lock in like that. So you were kind of working blind. But after a while, you had it down.

And we had to get a special press that only a union shop had. So I set it all up. The only thing I couldn't do was push the button to make the press go down. So this guy just sat on a bench and I went, "Okay,"—

Q: Because of the union regs [regulations]?

Dill: Yes, right. He pushed the button. He says, “How much you getting for these wall plaques?” And I said, “God, I have no idea. Probably about \$700 or \$800.” I didn’t want to—well, they were selling at that time for \$2,500. I don’t know what they’re worth now. I saw one in Naples recently that I’d done and they held up pretty good. Our biggest problem before is they would oxidize—lead would oxidize so I had to give them a washing down of—it might have been a bleach-water thing. And we washed them down. But that was one of the projects.

And then he put me onto these other projects with Jasper where he gave me a drawing of the lightbulb on a hanger—I don’t know if you know that image. It’s a lightbulb, full-scale lightbulb that comes down—it was hanging on a hanger. And there was a large print. And he said, “I want you to do a three-dimensional wax impression from this drawing.” This is before Jasper came in. So I did the best I could, for a week I was just working on this fucking thing. I thought it looked pretty good. Jasper looked at it and just kind of scraped it off—not in a mean way—he goes, “Sorry.” And then he put it together.

Anyway, that’s working for Jasper. So I knew him and we stayed there for a couple of months.

Q: Well, sticking with the Gemini thing, so you met Bob there as well and I know—

Dill: Okay, I’ll get to Bob, yes.

Q: And you mentioned in this other oral history that you got there, this was after *Booster* [1967], this was after the *Bonnie and Clyde* [inspired series], the—

Dill: Yes. It was just after *Booster*, I think.

Q: The *Reels [B + C]* [1968].

Dill: You'll have to look at the dates on the prints.

Q: And I know that—so you were in Gemini from '68 to—?

Dill: Oh '72, something like that. '71, '72, because then I moved to New York.

Q: Right. And I know that Bob worked on *Stoned Moon* [1969–70] at that time.



Robert Rauschenberg  
*Sky Garden (Stoned Moon)*, 1969  
Lithograph and screenprint  
89 1/4 x 42 inches (226.7 x 106.7 cm)  
From an edition of 35, published by Gemini G.E.L.,  
Los Angeles

Dill: Yes.

Q: There was a whole *Stoned Moon* series and I don't know if you remember him working on that or worked with him on that at all.

Dill: I remember him working on that, yes.

Q: I have a little booklet here of—

Dill: Oh, I remember that.

Q: [Looking through *Stoned Moon: Robert Rauschenberg*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2010] So I don't know if any of these might provoke something because actually the Foundation's recently put together an exhibit or collaborated on putting together an exhibit on *Stoned Moon*. And so I do actually have some questions about that specifically. So first off, what do you remember of him working on that series?

Dill: Yes, he was with Tyler. But I think—were these printed in the old space or the new space?

Q: Well, when was the shift?

Dill: '69.



Q: Because *Stoned Moon* was '69, so that would be right on the cusp.

Dill: Yes, this looks like the new shop, which I worked in very briefly. So it was right at the tail end there. But also Bob, as you know, was very sociable. And while we would work in the shop, but then he would—we'd all get together and I just remember him just being the most fun to be around. He just—he was just into it. And I don't know if it was because we were so young or it was—he loved L.A. Loved California. That's why he rented that house out in Malibu.

Q: I have a question about that as well.

Dill: Yes. I don't know if I can comment too much on that because I remember it was in the—it had to be in the new space, so it was right after I left for New York. They were proofing these. Because Tyler was still there. That's the thing, Tyler had a falling out with Gemini and started his own place upstate [Tyler Workshop Ltd., Bedford Village, New York]. And I was around during that period although I didn't know a lot—I knew a lot of weirdness was going on, but I didn't realize there were huge lawsuits going on.

Q: So at Gemini then, who were the personalities and how did that then add up to the working environment? What are your memories of that?

Dill: Well, we would get visits from guys that were in the movie business that were friends with Bob. Everyone was friends with Bob it seemed. He had this wide range of people that he knew.

And he rented that house out in Malibu—I remember that summer. It was so much fun.

Barbecues and we all drank in those days. It was just pretty cool. It was a lot of fun.

Q: Tell me about—

Dill: But how can I—that's not going to cover it.

Q: Tell me, describe the Malibu Road house.

Dill: Okay, I grew up on Malibu Road. Malibu Road used to be the Pacific Coast Highway many years ago. The new Pacific Coast Highway headed inland a little bit and went over the hill.

Malibu Road went along the beach. Now on the south side of Malibu Road was the Colony, Malibu Colony. So then there were some houses that were in the Malibu Colony gate and there were some that were just outside of it. And he rented one that was just outside of it and just a beautiful area. And we had a lot of barbecues and parties and everything like that. And Bob would just be the great entertainer. He's a really funny guy, but really wholesome in an Americana sense. He made you feel like you and he were in an inside joke, if he let you in that far.

I got along with him really well because first of all I have no homophobia. I just—growing up in Malibu, you were just raised with a lot of gay people around. It was just that kind of place. So Bob never approached me on that level, but I'd never had any kind of homophobia. And I think that was part of the reason that we got along so well. I never had to verbally say, “Hey listen, I'm

not gay, but—” that kind of thing. But we hugged and everything—in fact this is pretty funny.

When I got the show at Ileana’s, the first show I did at Sonnabend, there was a rumor going around that I had either slept with Bob Rauschenberg or slept with Ileana Sonnabend to get the show.

[Laughter]

Dill: Because how could this Californian just come out of nowhere and show at Sonnabend Gallery? Even in L.A. it was weird—they didn’t believe it because there was this whole other generation of artists that never penetrated New York at all. I think they might have had a small gallery uptown or something like that, but they just couldn’t—it wasn’t until much later with—oh, what’s his name? The *Roden Crater*. I don’t know why I can’t remember his name. [Note: project by James Turrell initiated in 1977, ongoing as of 2017]

Q: I can see him.

Dill: Right, long beard.

Q: Yes.

Dill: That’s when it really started to engage with the East Coast. And of course the West Coast was starting to become very aware of all of this. And I was luckily kind of a recipient of all that interest.

Q: But this rumor was going around that—

Dill: This rumor was going around.

Q: —that you slept with Bob or Ileana?

Dill: Oh yes. And so my answer was—people would come up to me and they would go, “Hey, some people think you slept with Bob Rauschenberg for this show or Ileana Sonnabend.” And I said, “Well, if I had my choice I would have taken Bob Rauschenberg—” choice of rumors.

[Laughter]

Dill: He was—well obviously he was a really good-looking guy. He could have been a movie star. And he had that personality.

Q: Charisma?

Dill: Yes, a lot of charisma. And people in Hollywood really liked him. And at two o’clock every day at Gemini, they opened it up for about an hour for people to come and visit and all of that.

Sid was very clever, he made the place a well-known location, so two o’clock was when photographers would come in, your token Hollywood celebrity or any of that kind of stuff. And Bob was a good schmoozer.

Anyway, I'm all over the place, but—

Q: No, which is fine. So you had all these encounters with him at the Malibu Road house. I know that one of the projects he was working on and gearing up for at the time was *Currents* [1970].

And I don't know if you remember—



Robert Rauschenberg  
*Features (from Currents) 61, 1970*  
Screenprint  
40 x 40 inches (101.6 x 101.6 cm)  
From an edition of 50, published by Dayton's  
Gallery 12 and Castelli Graphics, produced  
by Styria Studio

Dill: I remember *Currents* really well.

Q: We have a couple of *Currents* in the room here with us, over in the opposite corner.

Dill: I did a show at Pasadena Art Museum [solo exhibition, 1971]—this was after New York. We're jumping ahead here. And I remember going by Pasadena Art Museum and he was working on *Currents*. And they were current. The idea was the show was up and the content of what he made the collages out of was the news. So he worked all through until it was done, the

night and the whole thing. And then he had an opening. And that's when I first met [Christopher] Chris [Rauschenberg], actually. Chris went to clown school in Sarasota, Florida.

Q: Sarasota, right.

Dill: Yes. Ringling Brothers [Circus]. They had a clown school there. And I remember this collector, Robert Rowan, coming up to him. And Bob introduced him—we were all kind of standing around. Bob introduced his son and this guy Rowan, he was kind of like a big bird. And he'd go, "Oh, I'm very glad to meet you," and he touched him on the shoulder. And Chris went straight over, like he learned in clown school I guess. When he touched him on the shoulder, Chris just fell over straight like a tree. Laid on the ground.

[Laughter]

Dill: It was really funny.

Q: So *Currents*, you remember him—

Dill: I remember *Currents*, yes.

Q: Yes and him working on *Currents*.

Dill: But *Currents* came after New York, my first New York show. I guess what I'm getting to is, I knew Jasper enough to call him—

Q: Right.

Dill: —and all that. I knew Bob wasn't even in town. And so we stayed at Jasper's, which was a real experience. And then I was at Max's Kansas City at a dinner party and there was a party that Andy Warhol had thrown or something. Bob was at our table and I was saying to Jan, the girl I was with, and I said, "We should move from Jasper's, we should find our own place. I don't want to overdo it." He was not giving us vibes like, "You've got to go," or anything. I just wanted to go before any of that happened. And Bob overheard us. And he leans over the table and he goes, "You guys could do me a great favor." And we said, "What's that?" He says, "I'm moving to Florida. I need someone here to take care of some things for me on a daily basis. Would you want to move into my place?" And that's how we ended up here in late 1970, real late because I was getting ready for a show in '71.

And so I worked a lot of it here. And then when I had the opening, all these guys showed up. That's when everybody was going, "Who the hell are you?" But I remember one guy I used to hang out with quite a bit was Neil Jenney. You know the painter Neil Jenney? He and I kind of hung out together and he was a friend of Jasper's and a friend of Bob's. And anyway, Bob would come and go and it was always great when he was there because the levity of the situation would rise. We spent most of our time with Bob in the kitchen. And he would come up with these ideas like—he had the TV on constantly. There was always a television. And he said, "Why don't we

make a Western?” And I said, “How are we going to do that?” And he says, “We can make it in this kitchen.” So he started writing this script and all this kind of stuff. We never pulled it off, but that’s how he was. It was just a spur of the moment kind of thing.

Anyway, he did have some serious moments too, like he would talk about his ex-wife—he was married. And she was seriously burned in an accident. I can’t remember her name now. She’s still alive though. She was at his memorial, the one at the Met [Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York].

Q: Susan Weil.

Dill: Was that her name?

Q: Susan, yes.

Dill: Yes. And then there was [James] Jim Rosenquist. Were you there when they—

Q: No. No, I wasn’t.

Dill: Okay. When Jim got up to speak about being with Bob and all that, he remembered this one incident that happened in Minneapolis.



Q: And the funny thing is, I have actually—well you mentioned this in the previous interview and I interviewed Lynda Benglis.

Dill: Oh yes.

Q: And she also—

Dill: Lynda was with me, yes. Did she mention that?

Q: Yes she did actually when we sat down—

Dill: Oh for Christ's sake. I can't believe it.

Q: —which was a couple of months ago.

Dill: Well, what happened was—let's see if we got—we're sitting around this table. We were at the Daytons, so you can imagine what that was like. It was a Philip [C.] Johnson building and it had just the cutting edge contemporary art at the time. Big [Frank] Stellas and [Kenneth] Nolands and Rauschenberg, all that kind of stuff. They had all the A guys. And Johnson designed it so that he didn't have to show it all at once. It had sliding walls—it was really cool. And the entire art world was there; it was at the opening of the Walker Art Center [Minneapolis, 1971].

Anyway, we're sitting at a table. It was me and then Bob was next to me and then Lynda was next to me there and then Jim Rosenquist. Then [Thomas G.] Tom Terbell [Jr.], who was the director of the Pasadena Art Museum at the time, [who] had the Warhol show. So we were all sitting around and we were all drinking. And then Bob orders a Jack Daniel's and the waiter, who was like a butler-type guy, says, "I'm sorry, but the bar is closed and we're about to eat." So it was one of those things where they would serve you wherever you were sitting. And we're all sitting around this big round glass table. So Bob gets this weird expression on his face. And he says, "Why don't we go in the kitchen and help ourselves? Give me a hand." And I said, "Okay." So we went into the kitchen, this big, industrial kitchen, and got a tray and these big Kosta [Boda] glasses, those big heavy monsters, Swedish glasses, and he filled them all up with Jack Daniel's. He found the booze.

So I'm carrying this tray with about six Kosta glasses on it back out to our little glass table. And I can sense Bob's getting madder and madder about this whole thing—how dare they, that kind of thing. Although not being snobby—he wasn't snobby at all. He was just pissed. So I've got these drinks and I'm about to set them on the table. Bob turns around and kicks under the—did Lynda tell you this?—kicks the tray I'm holding and these Kosta glasses, like slow motion to me, go up like this, spewing booze all over, and then coming down and landing on this glass table and disintegrating it. And they had already—we had already been served our food, which was on the plate. So all of a sudden the glass table breaks and we're looking at a pile of Jack Daniel's and pasta and—

Q: Shattered glass.

Dill: —and shattered glass. And the guy who brought it up at Bob’s funeral was Jim Rosenquist because Rosenquist a couple of months before that had been in a really bad accident where his son lost his leg and his wife was in some kind of a coma, I don’t know what it was. And they were arguing on the [Interstate] 95—you can just see it. So he completely blamed himself and he was totally just absorbed by it. And then this thing happened. And the way Jim explained it, he said it snapped him out of it. So Jim and I have been friends ever since. But it was all Bob. Bob just gets up with no indication and [Dill mimes kick]. Oh, sorry. Doing a little choreography.

Q: Yes, exactly, we’re choreographing the scene.

Dill: And just does this back kick, like that, just out of the blue. Disintegrated. Sounded like a hydrogen bomb going off in this dinner party that was super uptight. But boy everybody loosened up after that. We all got invited to other tables because our table was ridiculous.

Q: So you said a second ago that you had lighthearted moments with Bob like this, but that you also had these serious conversations, like he would talk seriously about his former wife.

Dill: Yes.

Q: So what were those conversations?

Dill: A lot of guilt. He was undoubtedly gay, but he—and so that wasn't going to work out. But he always considered it like unfinished business. I'm sure he supported her and all that. And it was Chris's mom. He was very close to Chris.

Q: But he expressed to you—?

Dill: Yes. He would talk about his previous wife and how she was injured and how that was a chapter that never got really resolved and that he had to just move on. And then he connected with Chris a little later.

Q: And was that something that you remember particularly from, say, when you were here late '70, early '71? Or was this a longer thread?

Dill: No, this was after '71. Yes, this was more like in Malibu, on the beach.

Q: At the Malibu Road—

Dill: Malibu Road, yes. I'm pretty sure—I may have the chronology turned around a little bit. Like I can't remember if the Malibu thing happened after I went to New York and stayed here and all that.

Q: Because we're thinking, because if it was *Currents*—well, *Currents* was around '70. And we were talking at the Foundation he might have been there in '70. So it might have been prior. But

we can sort that out later— [Note: Rauschenberg decamped to Malibu in late October 1969 following a fire at his 381 Lafayette Street studio in New York; he worked on *Currents* in Malibu in the opening months of 1970.]

Dill: Yes.

Q: Yes, we'll look at it when we edit. Because I'm really curious about that thread of serious conversations with Bob because—

Dill: He could get serious.

Q: Yes because there's—so you've shared some stories about the levity and we've heard a lot of stories about the levity. What was that—?

Dill: But he could get serious at the drop of a hat. Brice Marden used to work for him. And so we were all sitting around and Bob came in. We were all sitting around the kitchen as usual. And Bob came in; he was wasted. Then Brice Marden came in and then somebody said something like, “Bob you're really—you should go to bed,” or something like that. And Bob just went, “I'm not like that.” And just snapped right out of being drunk and was dead serious. Not in a bad mood or anything like that, but like [snaps fingers]. I went, “God, that guy sure can drink.” [Laughs] I mean drink and still hold his shit together.

Q: Yes.

Dill: He wasn't like [Willem] de Kooning. He wasn't a blackout, pass-out drunk, like Cedar bar [Cedar Tavern, New York] style.

Q: Would you go to the Cedar bar?

Dill: Oh, I checked it out. It was way past my time when all that interesting stuff happened.

Q: I'm really curious about—we're here, we're in the chapel at 381 right now—if you could really walk us through the space. Let's start with this room. When you lived here, what was 381 like? Let's start with the physical space, then we'll move more into the art or the social space.

Dill: Okay. You walk in, the front was the same. The only difference was that it wasn't as easy an access to the chapel as it is now. In fact—

I think in later years, they may have even modernized the chapel a little bit. Maybe not. Did they change this?

Q: I don't know, actually.

Dill: I think they did.

Q: So you're saying you walk in, the access has changed?

Dill: Yes and it was smaller.

Q: The chapel?

Dill: Maybe there was more storage in here or something. Because I was amazed. I went, god, Bob works in here? From L.A. standards, it seemed like a small studio. But I would come in here and just see what was going on. And then of course the living area and then we lived in the bedroom area.

Q: So you were up on maybe the fourth [floor] or the—

Dill: Yes, four—is three the kitchen?

Q: Yes.

Dill: Yes. So you go into the kitchen—you'd go up a couple of flights of stairs, you'd be into the kitchen and that was the main room. There was a big long room and at one side of the room was an arboretum, an inside terrarium kind of thing, which was mostly plants indigenous to southern regions like Florida. He always had a thing about the jungle. In fact, one time when he was out in California, we were all going to show him Death Valley. And so we drove out and I could tell right away he wasn't a desert person. And we got out of the car. He looks around and he goes, "Is this it?" [Laughs]

No, he was a jungle guy. He was born on the Gulf Coast [Port Arthur, Texas] and all that kind of growth and the humidity and all that kind of stuff, I know that was in his blood.

Q: Do you see that in his work?

Dill: That's a good question. I never even thought about it that way. I have to think about that for a second because there were scenes in his work that related to Florida. But I don't ever remember seeing a work that was totally dedicated to Florida. I think he was more into the phenomena of television and news during that period anyway and taking the now and combining it with his aesthetic. I think that's how the Combines [1954–64] came together. Just crazy stuff, like the goat, which is—it's got a round—

Q: *Monogram* [1955–59].



Robert Rauschenberg  
*Monogram*, 1955–59

Combine: oil, paper, fabric, printed paper, printed reproductions, metal, wood, rubber shoe heel, and tennis ball on canvas with oil and rubber tire on Angora goat on wood platform mounted on four casters  
42 x 63 1/4 x 64 1/2 inches (106.7 x 160.7 x 163.8 cm)  
Moderna Museet, Stockholm  
Purchase 1965 with contribution from Moderna Museets Vänner/The Friends of Moderna Museet



Dill: *Monogram*, yes. It's got a torso, so it's round. So something round with a hole in it will fit in there very naturally. And he used to tell me things like, what you want to do is, you want to— if you're going to use multimedia stuff and found objects, you don't want the found object to be so abstract that it loses its identity. So if it has identity, let's say a coffee pot or let's take something like a chair—something generic, which he's used in his paintings before—the chair never loses its connotation, but adds to the collective connotation of the piece. I think that's probably why he called them Combines. And then he would paint into them, thus the Abstract Expressionist connection. And he used to tell me things like that.



Robert Rauschenberg

*Pilgrim*, 1960

Combine: oil, graphite, paper, printed paper, and fabric on canvas with painted wood chair

79 1/4 x 53 7/8 x 18 5/8 inches (201.3 x 136.8 x 47.3 cm)

Private collection

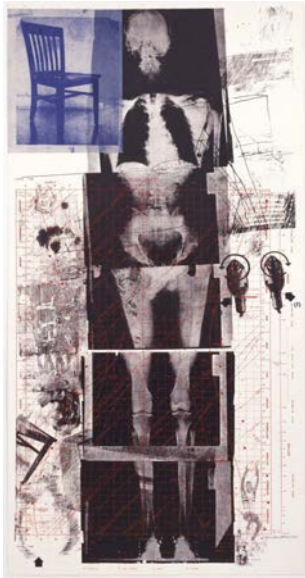
He was a lesson especially when he was here and I was in here. He would say, “You never want that material you're using to lose its connotation.” Now he only knew the materials I was working with in relationship to me, like at that time I was working with sand and dirt and light and glass. And the thing he liked about it was that all of those materials combined to make this

poetic thing happen. But neither material lost its connotation. You understand what I'm saying? And it made it seem more universal.

And then another trick he used, which I never forgot, was his titles are amazing. And I said, "How do you title? How do you get these titles?" And he says, "Well first of all, I'm always working on a vocabulary of titles." And he says, "I want to—when I title something, a lot of times I'll title it in a very non sequitur way," so that what happens is subconsciously you take this word, like Fool's House or something like that—I think that might have been a Jasper Johns painting though [note: Johns titled several works *Fool's House*]. But you take a word like that and then you'd see the painting. And what would happen was subconsciously you would make a connection. That's what he told me. "You'd make a connection between the image you're looking at and the title and the illusion was that it seemed much more universal." People would go, "What does that have to do with that?" And then their mind would start to try to make connections, so the work seemed larger than life. Pretty good trick actually.

Q: So he liked that there would have to be a distance to travel between what someone might see in the piece and what they might see in the name and that somehow would expand what the piece was doing.

Dill: Yes, right. Yes and sometimes he'd use an image that—like *Booster*, okay? And it's a great word anyway, but then you'd see it. Of course he did have a booster in there, but all the other stuff around it so you'd make these connections. And he said that was one of his tricks, tricks of the trade.



Robert Rauschenberg  
*Booster*, 1967  
Lithograph and screenprint  
72 x 35 1/2 inches (182.9 x 90.2 cm)  
From an edition of 38, published by Gemini G.E.L.,  
Los Angeles

He also would say things like, “You want to see the most valuable Jasper Johns ever made?” And I went, “Sure.” And he says, “I own it.” So we’d go up to I think it was the fourth floor, where he kept all of his trades and other artists’ work. Is that still up there?

Q: It’s offices now.

Dill: Oh, it’s offices now. So they must have archived it.

Q: Yes.

Dill: But it was just a pile of stuff. And he shows me this painting that was not a particularly engaging Jasper Johns. And I said, “What’s special about this one?” He says, “Exactly. The only

person that's going to want to buy this from me is Jasper to get it out of the inventory. And I'm just going to charge him a fortune." [Laughs] Then he'd start laughing.

Q: [Laughs] So when you were here, you talked about this space—I suppose Rocky must have been here at that time.

Dill: Rocky?

Q: The tortoise. I wonder maybe—

Dill: Oh yes, the turtle. God, I forgot his name was Rocky. Yes, he was there. And also he had a couple dogs and the dogs would tear the furniture apart. And then he had this maid that would come that had been working for him for years and even though the chair had literally a chunk ripped out of it and there's the foam and all of that she vacuumed it and cleaned it up and just left everything the way it was, only it was clean. The dogs just raised hell with all the furniture. It was pretty funny actually.

Q: So when he wasn't here, was it just you and Jan here?

Dill: Yes. And Chuck Arnoldi came, stayed for a while. And Neil Jenney would come by all the time. And he left some work here for us to see. Neil Jenney is an interesting guy. He never let anybody into his studio, nobody. He would show his work out in the hall. And he worked downtown. And I even said, "Boy, I'd love to see your studio." He goes, "Nobody sees my

studio,” that kind of thing. Kind of an eccentric guy. But he was the kind of guy that guys like Johns and Rauschenberg and that whole group really liked. He was really a cool guy. And we hit it off pretty good.

Q: And he'd come and hang around here?

Dill: Yes. He actually brought some work over, not in here, but up on the third floor. They're in museums now, the Neil Jenneys. But he left them there for almost a month and they just, if you knew his work—Google him.

Q: Yes.

Dill: And then he came by a month later and I think he really liked the idea that his stuff was at least hanging over at Bob Rauschenberg's. The thing about Bob Rauschenberg in those days was he was kind of the spirit of New York. He was at the top of his game and he was very visible in New York when he was in New York. And then he decided to move. And you know about his story in Captiva [Florida] where—

Q: I've been down there actually.

Dill: Oh you've been there.

Q: Yes.

Dill: Okay, so you know there are these little houses around. And he would buy them—

Q: Yes, which he would buy from the neighbors.

Dill: —and let them live there until they died—

Q: So by the time you moved to New York, he's moving—

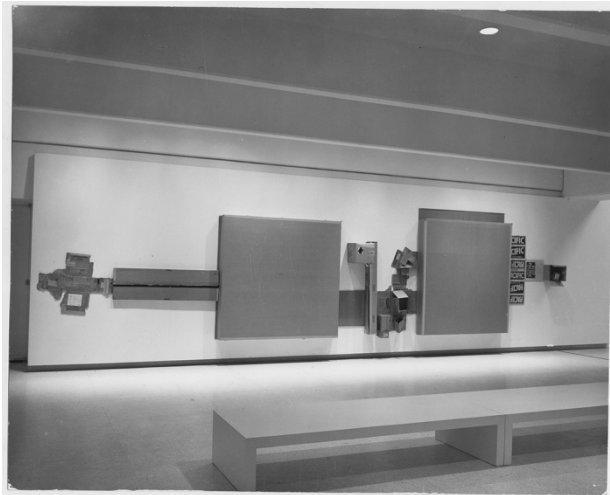
Dill: —free.

Q: Right, he's moving down. And then what would happen when he would come back to town here? How would the space change, him being here versus not being here?

Dill: Well, we gave him a lot of space down here. Remember, the third floor was the social level. But when Bob was here and working, I didn't go in and bother him or any of that stuff. He was really into it. If you watched him work, it's not like a normal artist. He would—well maybe he was. He would just take objects and just see if there was any kind of visual flux between them, any connotative flux. So he was always doing that.

Q: In this previous interview you mentioned that you helped him glue together some of the *Cardbirds* [1971]—

Dill: Oh yes, we did a show at—“we” did a show [laughs]—me and half the art world did a show at the opening of the Minneapolis museum or the Walker Art Center [note: referring to the opening of the Edward Larrabee Barnes building in 1971. The exhibition was *Works for New Spaces*, 1971]. And I did a big sand piece and then Bob did a big *Cardbird* piece. [Note: Rauschenberg exhibited *Radiant White / 952 (Cardboard)*, 1971. The *Cardbirds* were editioned works described here.] This time the cardboard was archival; it was printed on rag paper, but it looked just like cardboard. It had the stamps on it and all that kind of stuff. And I think that was all printed at Gemini. But it was cardboard, but it was—it must have been very expensive. And it was cardboard, but it was archival cardboard—it was acid-free.



Installation view of Rauschenberg's *Radiant White / 952 (Cardboard)* (1971), *Works for New Spaces*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, 1971. Photo: Eric Sutherland

Q: Well we were talking about this actually right before we started that apparently some of them have kept really well.

Dill: Yes, so maybe they weren't all—

Q: And then that others have been—

Dill: Just disintegrated, yes.

Q: —have discolored.

Dill: Cardboard's got so much acid in it. So we put them all together. I finished my piece. I just worked with him for a couple of days. And then we carefully cut—and I mean really carefully—cut the back, so it had a backing out of this thin mahogany door skin stuff. And then he mounted it with an archival—I think it was rabbit-skin glue even or something like that. And so it had some density to it. It worked really good. [Note: now describing *Radiant White* / 952  
(*Cardboard*)]

Q: And—

Dill: And he did it right there. He came in with a bunch of newspapers or with a bunch of cardboard that was shipped from the West Coast or something and just started—he had no problem working in front of you.

Q: The opposite one might say of—

Dill: Yes, like Jasper, somebody like that.



Q: Can you think of other situations where he looped you into the construction or fabrication of pieces? Was that typical?

Dill: Yes, well, when we were in shows together—I'm not saying I was up on his level. But in these group shows—sometimes I would end up in a show like that—I'd always help him, yes. There was, let's see, *Cardbirds* and also—what was the name of the ones with the newspaper—

Q: The *Currents*?

Dill: *Currents*, yes. *Currents*, helped him with that.

Q: So what sort of a thing might you do then with *Currents*?

Dill: He would lay it out along the floor and he usually had a glass of Jack Daniel's with him. And he would just work these things out and then lay them out. Through his instructions, then we made them so they were actually feasible to own. I don't know if he ever sold *Currents*. Probably did. It's not as current—the whole idea was—



Robert Rauschenberg  
*Currents*, 1970  
Screenprint  
72 x 648 inches (182.9 x 1654.9 cm)  
From an edition of 6 published by Dayton's  
Gallery 12 and Castelli Graphics, produced  
by Styria Studio  
The Museum of Modern Art, New York  
Riva Castleman Endowment Fund

Q: It's *now*.

Dill: —that the paper was fresh. It was newsprint. And it was this morning's news so it was very current. And he got it all done from like 9:00 to probably 9:00 when the opening was. But it had to be made the day of the opening so it was current news.

Q: So when you're here in 381 are you using the space as a studio? Or are you—

Dill: Just to draw in.

Q: —working separate?

Dill: Just to draw in. I never worked down here. I would look a lot down here, but no, I worked up in the kitchen.

Q: And so I imagine Bob must have had pieces everywhere. Do you remember any conversations with him about older pieces that he'd done or things that might be in the space or anything like that?

Dill: Oh yes, he would comment on them. But he would comment on them not in a distant way. They were his—they were *his*. But then you would have to understand that when he was living

upstairs, he had a huge collection of really cool artifacts, like Cherokee—I think he had some Cherokee in him actually like something in his—

Q: Yes, I think so.

Dill: But like a full deerskin pullover thing that I'm sure the Museum of Natural History would kill for. And moccasins that were beautifully handmade. And he had this—what he did was he made a shelf. I wonder if it's still up there? He had the shelf and then he had it Plexiglassed in so the dust couldn't get to it and people couldn't pick it up and do all that kind of stuff with it.

Q: So how long do you stay here then, when you were living here?

Dill: Probably about four months, something like that.

Q: And so—

Dill: Then I got my own place on Crosby Street—49 Crosby.

Q: And so how long do you stay in New York because you do go back to—

Dill: I went back and forth. And then when I got the place I stayed a couple of years and then I would go to Europe and then I'd come back to California. I mean, I am a Californian. I've spent

a lot of time in New York; I would say I have more friends in New York than I do in California because in California you kind of stick to your—it's just much more spread out.

Q: Well Manhattan—

Dill: I've got friends of course, but I had some really great ones here, like Neil Jenney and like Bob and Rosenquist.

Q: So you shuttled back and forth a lot essentially between the coasts?

Dill: Oh yes, back and forth. I would make things—I found it easier for me to make things in L.A. Like when I came back from New York the first time, I wanted to get a secluded place to make these pieces because I was invited for that Minneapolis deal. So I found a really cool studio, an abandoned elementary school in Topanga Canyon [Los Angeles]. And the guy who owned it or had the connection to the guy who owned it—I never paid any rent. He just said, “Just use it,” that kind of thing. So I was up in Topanga a lot. And just knowing the area, it was a lot easier for me to get the kind of materials that I wanted to use when I work. But I was in New York a lot. Now my kids live here so I'm—

Q: So in those subsequent years then, what sort of intersections would you have with Bob?

You'd see him at galleries? You'd see him socially? If you wouldn't mind just kind of charting post-70, '71, your relationship with Bob.

Dill: Yes, I would see Bob a lot. I'd get a call whenever he was in town. Gemini was super-active. It's not as active as it is now, mainly because Stanley's not with us anymore, Stanley ["Stan"] Grinstein. And let's face it, Sid's getting old—hard to believe. So it's gotten a little bit more low-key. And also the big recession really peeled everybody back like an onion and Gemini was really having a tough time. And they had just got, they have the new—well, I call it the new facility. It's been there for fifteen, twenty years now.

Q: But it was a different story, you're saying—

Dill: Yes, it was a different story. And Bob was spending more and more time in Captiva and not retiring or anything like that. He never retired. But I guess things kind of slowed down a little bit. Then there was all this bullshit about what's a Rauschenberg worth, that kind of thing.

Q: When do you remember that?

Dill: Huh?

Q: When do you remember that starting to rise up?

Dill: Oh, that would be early, mid-nineties, something like that. And I knew this woman, Deborah McLeod, who ran—do you know who she is?

Q: No.

Dill: She ran [Lawrence G.] Gagosian's gallery [Gagosian Gallery, Los Angeles] for a long time. And then she also worked for Sotheby's. She's a very knowledgeable person. And she's involved in some kind of thing with Sotheby's now, I'm pretty sure—or Christie's, I'm sorry, Christie's.

Q: Christie's.

Dill: Yes. And she'd say, "Oh god, you can't give away a Rauschenberg after 1972," or something like that. Which was really sad to hear. And I said, "Well, maybe they don't get it."

Q: So what was that bullshit then?

Dill: It was all like a—look, if you go that high, you're going to fall that much further. Being a famous artist, I would think—I was never in any league with Bob, but it's a transient situation. How long are you going to stay there? And then New York especially—I was here for that—went through this very radical Minimalist movement. [Donald] Don Judd had always been doing that, but then you had Fred Sandback—he was my neighbor actually, on Crosby. And it got to the point where if you go to a show basically—like Fred Sandback was very hot, so what you would see would be a line of yarn on the floor. [Laughs] It was extremely minimal. There wasn't a hell of a lot to look at. And then Mary Boone [Gallery, New York] opens up with Julian Schnabel and reset the whole clock again [1979]. And I think that's when Bob, people started to really appreciate Bob because of the idea of objects, collage, paint, go back to 1952, he was doing that.

Q: But it's your perception that there was a trough there—

Dill: Oh yes. There was definitely a trough.

Q: Do you remember him ever talking about that? Did you ever have conversations with him?

Dill: He'd bitch about it.

Q: Like how?

Dill: Oh, just kind of—not a big deal but, “Fucking assholes, they don't even understand what they're looking at.” But then he wouldn't go on with it. He wouldn't dwell on it. And he was having some physical problems then too.

Q: Because we're into the nineties now or later than that?

Dill: Yes. He was on a walker for a while. And then he quit the booze. And I went to a thing that he invited me to and he was completely sober, but hilarious again. I should have brought this picture of he and I. I can email it to you.

Q: That would be great, yes.

Dill: Yes, it's a great picture. And Sid Felsen took it.

Q: Oh great, yes, because the Foundation is always really curious about things like that too.

Dill: Yes, I've got a bunch of them. So you haven't talked to Sid yet?

Q: I've not, but someone else has.

Dill: Okay because he's got—

Q: One of the other interviewers has.

Dill: Because he's got a treasure trove of photographs of Bob and that whole era. These guys documented it.

Q: Yes, so tell me about that time, seeing Bob when he had sobered up.

Dill: He didn't miss—well when he was sobered up—how can I put this? He didn't miss a trick. He knew everything that was going on in the room. You could tell. He was in complete control mentally of the entire room. And I think part of the problem of his drinking was to shut that off a little bit. I know that when we were at that Dayton party, it was a very uncomfortable scene. And he was getting kind of wasted to say the least. And I think in situations like that he just didn't feel comfortable and just wanted to phase out.



In fact the one—I'd never heard him say a bad thing about anybody. But I was standing next to him at this cocktail party at the Daytons the night of the fateful dinner and these people came up and said, "Oh you're Bob Rauschenberg. We're so glad to meet you. We own one of your prints," and they're blah da da. They're going on and on and on. And he goes, he just went, "Oh big fucking deal," and kind of walked away from them. And then he caught himself and he says, "Wait a minute, I'm not like that." And he went back and apologized to them, all that kind of stuff.

Q: I've heard some of that, that he—

Dill: You've heard that before?

Q: Well, not that exact story, but—it's interesting when it comes to this because he could be very gregarious, right? Clearly extremely outgoing and have all these things—

Dill: Well, he was a magnet.

Q: Right. But that there could be this flipside.

Dill: Yes. There could be—that came out very seldom though. I remember hanging out with him and he said, "Hey, where's your brother?" My brother's an artist.

Q: Yes.

Dill: And Guy [Dill] actually knew Bob pretty well too—my brother Guy. And he just said something like, “Where’s Guy?” And I said, “Oh, he went back to L.A.” He said, “What happened? His laundry get dirty?” Things like that. Time to go do the laundry so you go home.

[Laughs]

Q: So I have some Los Angeles/New York questions and one is actually so you mentioned the Grinsteins, Stan Grinstein?

Dill: Grinstein, yes.

Q: Grinstein. It seems to me if you look at the history of Gemini and then the L.A. art scene from the late sixties on, that couple is really key. And you mentioned their parties here [in the previous oral history], but I’m wondering if you could talk about—

Dill: Oh the parties were amazing.

Q: Because we’ve now been talking somewhat about the social end here [in New York City], but I’m curious about your intersections with Bob in L.A. and that art social scene, the Grinsteins and all that.

Dill: Yes, the Grinstein soirees or parties were really a lot of fun—a lot of fun. The Grinsteins were pretty well off and they bought a huge place on Rockingham [Avenue], actually right across the street from O. J. Simpson. [Laughs] And they would throw a party and the word would get out and a lot of artists would show up. And it was a party for Bob or for whatever artist was there—but mostly Bob. Sometimes he'd live there and sometimes he'd stay at mostly the Chateau Marmont [Los Angeles] I think—until he got the Malibu house, but that was for a short period of time.

But they would throw these amazing parties because anybody who was anybody in the art world—in L.A. anyway—would show up and a lot of New Yorkers. And that's how L.A. artists met New York artists. I met them through Gemini. But these Grinstein parties were amazing ways to network, plus they were a hell of a lot of fun. Just imagine a whole house full of mainly artists and curators and people like yourself—it was just a really good time. You let your hair down. Bob would get really shitfaced at these things, but at the same time he was still gracious.

What can I say about the Grinsteins? The Grinsteins were like a host to artists. William [S.] Burroughs has stayed there. Allen Ginsberg was a regular. Gregory Corso I think had been there a couple of times. Stanley was really into the Beat scene and he had them staying with him. [Isamu] Noguchi stayed at the house. So it was always interesting there and they were really gracious hosts. And both of them, Elyse [Grinstein], his wife, who is a really terrific lady, “Oh, let's have a dinner party for Bob,” that kind of thing.

And then their collection—you've never been in their house, right?

Q: No, I've not.

Dill: It's a museum. In fact I worry about it because Stanley is gone and Elyse is in her mid-eighties or something like that. They should have a guard there or something. There's—this is Elyse. She'd come home from wherever she was—and I remember I was there. I had to talk to her about something so I was just waiting around. She'd come home, she'd bring you in, she had her purse and she would just kind of casually lay it down on the Joseph Cornell sculpture. It was that kind of life with these huge Stellas in the room. They bought this gigantic Stella, one of the biggest ones I've ever seen. I think it might be in his retrospective, I'm not sure. Is that still up, the Frank Stella retrospective? [Note: *Frank Stella: A Retrospective*, Whitney Museum of American Art, 2015–16] Anyway, doesn't matter.

They would just build a wing for it onto their property in Brentwood. They had a huge Ellsworth Kelly and a huge Rauschenberg and then a Stella in this big room that they built especially for those pieces. They collected [Richard] Serra, but this is earthquake country. And they had the deck of cards [*One Ton Prop (House of Cards)*, 1969], which fell and Elyse went no because by that time she had grandchildren. Just one of those things would slam you.

God, what can I think to say? I feel like I haven't said enough.

Q: Well, another way of getting at that—

Dill: Bob was like—he had the charisma to create a community. And doing things for him, working for him and stuff, was really fun. And then he was also an extremely generous guy. And he would make weird pieces and give them to you for Christmas.

Q: There's actually this correspondence here in the [Rauschenberg Foundation] archives from you and there's also some stuff from your brother to Bob as well.

Dill: Yes.

Q: But actually thanking him specifically for a Christmas gift that he gave in '77. It's not named, what it is, but—

Dill: It was a really nice print about this size [indicating with hands], a very small edition.

Q: So for the record, what would we—

Dill: It would be about like this.

Q: Like a 5-by-7, would you say?

Dill: No, bigger. Maybe 7-by-10 or something, 7-by-9. Anyway, yes, he would just give you things. I've got a huge poster and it says, "To Laddie. Love, Bob Rauschenberg." [Laughs]

Q: And it's one of his?

Dill: Yes. And stuff you'd never sell—you'd have to be really out on the streets. Yes he would always do little—like I said earlier he was always putting things together. If we were talking right here, he might notice that pitcher half full with water and then, what could I do with that? That kind of thing.

Q: And it's also interesting to me that he is in Los Angeles and the scene that he's slotting in—if you can think about someone like you or someone like Chuck for example—you guys are all of a different generation, right? You're all coming up in the late sixties.

Dill: Yes, when I met Bob I was twenty-five.

Q: Yes. And he was born in '25.

Dill: 1925? He was born in that year?

Q: Plus or minus one, yes, so he would have been in his forties by that time.

Dill: Yes. An amazing looking guy, just with the white shirt—I think he invented the look, the white shirt with the sleeves.

Q: With the rolled cuff?

Dill: Yes, that kind of thing.

[Laughter]

Dill: And those hands. He had a relatively dark complexion because he had, I guess maybe he had some Indian in his blood—I don't know. But he was naturally tan.

And it was sad when he got sick. He got out of that—he always had abdominal problems. And then something happened with his leg and he was on a walker. I remember going—I hadn't seen him in a couple of months, I came up to him and I said, “Hey Bob, how are you doing with this?” And he goes, “Not very well.”

Q: And I'm sorry, I do have some questions about him aging, but just a couple of final questions about Los Angeles. So one is that he continues to do work at Gemini.

Dill: Yes.

Q: And you were gone from Gemini by the early seventies?

Dill: But I would check in with them—they were family.

Q: Well, maybe just scrolling through this book [*Rauschenberg at Gemini*, 2010], if you happen to—there's a series of pieces of course that he did there including—

Dill: Well, here are the cardboards [*Cardbirds*, 1971].

Q: Right, exactly.

Dill: Now these are archival—at least partially archival.

Q: [Laughs] And right behind you, those two are from *Pages* [1974] and *Fuses* [1974], which is one [project] that came out of work that had its genesis in France. They were editioned at Gemini. [Note: At the time of this interview the chapel had Rauschenberg pieces laid out and displayed on the walls.]

Dill: I bought one of these.

Q: Really, at the time?

Dill: Yes, I got the family discount and paid twenty-five dollars a month for god knows how long. Mine was a telephone pole. It was taken from an angle and it went way up and then it had a bird in it. But it was this handmade paper—it was out of this series, for sure.

Q: Because that was '74, I think.



Dill: Yes. And in 1979 I had the opportunity to buy my first house in Santa Monica. I used that print as a down payment for the house. People ask me, “What about investing in art?” I said, “Well, I bought a Rauschenberg multiple and used it for the down payment of my house,” which was a true story. But I still have the ones he made in China, got a couple of those.

Q: The *7 Characters* series [1982]? Or—

Dill: Yes, the one that comes down and it’s got a silk— A piece of silk, a mirror in it and everything—it’s probably in here.

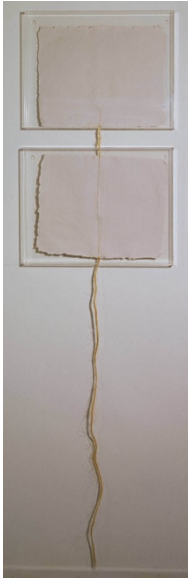
Q: Because that was early eighties.

Dill: Wait, there’s mine. [Indicating an artwork in the book]

Q: What’s the name of that, for the record?

Dill: I don’t have my reading glasses.

Q: Here, I can see. We’re looking at *Page 4* [(*Pages*), 1974].



Robert Rauschenberg  
*Page 4 (Pages)*, 1974  
Handmade paper, twine  
83 x 20 inches (210.8 x 50.8 cm)  
From an edition of 19 published by Gemini  
G.E.L., Los Angeles

Dill: That's what it's called?

Q: *Page 4*. Right, *Page 4*, 1974, handmade paper and twine. Interesting, going back to your anecdote about Bob and titles.

Dill: Yes. He made all those in China.

Q: Well some of these came out of—the *Pages*—

Dill: Well, I'm sorry, I jumped the gun. Those were—I don't know where those were made. But they were Gemini prints.

Q: So there's stuff like this, which might be right.

Dill: Yes, that's what [my other Rauschenberg] looks like.

Q: We're now looking at *7 Characters* from '82.



Robert Rauschenberg  
*Individual (From 7 Characters)*, 1982  
Silk, ribbon, paper, paper-pulp relief, ink, and gold leaf on handmade Xuan paper, with mirror, framed in a Plexiglas box  
43 x 31 x 2 1/2 inches (109.2 x 78.7 x 6.4 cm)  
From an edition of 70 unique variations, published by Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles

Dill: Yes. And that's when I had that conversation with Deborah McLeod and I asked for an appraisal. I would never sell them because I had already promised my daughter that it was hers. She's an artist; she lives in Bushwick [Brooklyn, New York]. But it's in California at her mom's house—but it's hers. And I said, "What do you think those things are worth now?" And she says, "It's really hard to say because I can't seem to get a good hook into anything after 1972," or something like that.

Q: There still seems to be a lot of conversation about how the later—

Dill: Then there was a period where he kind of laid off. I felt possibly he wasn't feeling well or something or went through some kind of crisis because the work got really low-key. He even explained to me, he says, "Well, right now what I'm doing is the newspaper transfers and the prints." And he said, "What I do is, when I leave New York, I go to the magazine store and I buy all these magazines and I take them with me down to Florida and then I do these collages." But most of them were—remember that one series which admittedly was a little boring compared to his other work, where they're just cut straight? I remember one that had a Husky in it, Husky dog.

Q: Yes, right.

Dill: And they looked like—well, we're getting pretty close right here. What year is that one [indicating a piece in the room]?

Q: I don't know, actually.

Dill: It was mostly just squares and things like that; it was not like this kind of thing [indicating *Page 4*].

Q: You noticed him getting a bid more subdued in that way?

Dill: Yes. And less and less of the sculpture, more of let's let the other guy do it.

Q: Right.

Dill: I figured he was just kind of getting—maybe he was in mid-life crisis or something, getting old.

Q: You're talking about, are we in the seventies here you're talking about or is this later?

Dill: Seventies, no, this was more like in the eighties and nineties.

Q: Okay. So in the [interview] session that you did a few years ago, you talked about this idea of how Bob's palette is reflective of setting and you shared this anecdote about a trip that you heard about him taking to see a [Jacopo da] Pontormo in Italy. And so there's this whole thing of Bob and place, right? And I think you see that particularly when he travels. You take a *7 Characters* piece and you can see the influence of China on that.

Dill: Oh yes.

Q: And so I'm really curious, so as a Los Angeles artist, what you think the saturation of Los Angeles is in his work? He came to visit so many times and if you look in this book, there are whole series that are explicitly about Los Angeles, using photos of L.A.: there's the *L.A. Flakes*

from '82, *Illegal Tender L.A.* from '91, and there's *L.A. Uncovered* in '98. So this is a place and a theme that Bob returned to.

Dill: Oh yes, all the time.

Q: And so given that you've made your home there and you made so much of your own work there, what is your sense of Bob and Los Angeles in terms of his work?

Dill: Well, that's a good question. First of all I think he was very comfortable in L.A. because of Gemini and of this—we were the peanut gallery, the cheerleaders of Bob. No, he felt very comfortable in L.A. and he could work in L.A. L.A.'s a working town. It's very true. Frank Stella even said that. Like he did a whole series of the aluminum pieces—he made those in L.A. And it's just a lot easier to get stuff done in L.A. I had a studio where you could drive a semi into the ground floor so there was never the hassle of moving things. Or I'd have a huge delivery of raw materials that they just drove right in the studio, forklifted over into the corner. And very seldom can that happen out here. Maybe in Brooklyn it can.

Q: Although less and less, even there.

Dill: Or if you happen to be Frank Stella and you build this giant—but for normal people—

[Laughter]

Dill: And also, the meter wasn't always on like you felt like it was in New York. You knew you were going to have to go somewhere and it was going to cost you money and all that kind of stuff. This is just coming from an artist's point of view. And I didn't have any problem because I was making some money, but I'd hate to be here broke. It doesn't work.

Q: Yes, you can skim a lot farther in L.A. than here, I think that's true.

Dill: I used to ask Bob a lot about what it was like when he was my age. He says, "Well, there's no comparison. My rent was forty dollars a month." And he shared the studio down in the fish market with Jasper Johns.

Q: Yes, it's a different scene. And now, my god, I can't imagine what the rent on that place would be.

Dill: Oh, forget it. I don't even know if that building's still there. It's probably huge.

Q: So if L.A. was a working town, what do you make—especially since Bob used all these found objects originally and then found images. So I'm curious if you have a sense then of Bob in L.A., if he ever talked about it.

Dill: Well, he had a really interesting way to—L.A., you'd pick up on this really fast if you came back. L.A. is very industrially oriented and tech-oriented. So you've got all these things at your disposal. And I think he fell in love with it when he was asked to be in the *Art and Technology*

show that was put on at LACMA [Los Angeles County Museum of Art] in the—around early seventies, possibly late sixties [note: 1971]. And he made this great piece that really was just a big vat of mud and had these pumps under it that just bubbled it up [*Mud Muse*, 1968–71]. I don't think he could make it here [New York City]. But anyway, he liked the idea that anything's possible in L.A. because one thing we had was space. We didn't have any respect, but we had space.



Robert Rauschenberg  
*Mud Muse*, 1968–71  
Bentonite mixed with water in aluminum-and-glass vat, with sound-activated compressed-air system and control console  
48 x 108 x 144 inches (121.9 x 274.3 x 365.8 cm)  
Moderna Museet, Stockholm  
Gift of the New York Collection  
Engineers: Frank LaHaye, Lewis Ellmore, George Carr, Jim Wilkinson, and Carl Adams  
Sound artist: Petrie Mason Robie

[Laughter]

Q: Even the light in Los Angeles is really quite—

Dill: Oh, it's really different.

Q: A lot of your work has to do with light, sand, and land. You've been doing that since the late sixties.



Dill: Well I grew up on the coast and that's the kind of light you get.

Q: So Sid Felsen talks about this in his oral history and he says that, "But he [Bob] loved to shop and he loved Los Angeles because I think he loved the light, the freedom, compared to say living in New York. He had freedom in Florida, but Los Angeles was like a big city with freedom and shopping."

Dill: And shopping?

Q: And shopping.

Dill: He was a shopper?

[Laughter]

Q: According to Sid.

Dill: He wore the same clothes all the time.

[Laughter]

Q: The rolled cuffs again, yes.

Dill: It's changing though. L.A. is getting very congested, so it's harder to move. And that was my experience here. I was on the fourth floor of the loft on Crosby Street and it was very difficult for me to get the kind of expansion I wanted to get and the kind of scale that I was interested in. It was a typical loft and it was nice, but just—yes.

Q: So do you have any further comment about Bob and L.A.? I have a few questions to close us out, but if there's anything about that? Because there's been so much material about this oral history about Bob and New York of course, but since he did do so much work out there with Gemini, if you have any sort of thoughts on what Bob liked, if Bob ever talked about Los Angeles to you or the scene out there.

Dill: Oh, he loved L.A. Yes, he never said anything negative about it except that the center of the world was New York. That's why he said he was going to do me a favor and introduce me to his New York dealers because he thought well, ultimately you just can't just be in this paradise and just rot like a vegetable. The older I get the more I appreciate Bob because he really believed in me, which was so cool. He volunteered that. I didn't ask him for that. We had a connection. Not an obvious physical connection or anything like that, but we had a thing. Not like lovers or anything like that, but like buddies, pals. And I know that he had problems with long-time boyfriends. Lawsuits coming out of his ears on that. I don't know, did Bob—what was his name?

Q: Darryl [R. Pottorf]? Are you thinking of—

Dill: No, not Darryl. I'm kind of allergic to Darryl a little bit. I don't know where Darryl came in actually. He just sort of, in the latter years just—

Q: Right. Well, of course Bob was with Bob Petersen in the seventies.

Dill: Bob Petersen, yes. And Bob Petersen was part of my generation and I think he surfed and was athletic. Unfortunately though, when you get that close to Bob, your art starts to really look like Bob's. So that's kind of a problem.

Q: And would you say—

Dill: The last guy, what's his name?

Q: Darryl Pottorf.

Dill: Darryl. Just completely, his work is just completely out of Bob Rauschenberg. Don't you think that? Or maybe he's changed. I know that this is on tape—he'll probably send me a letter bomb now—but I never jived with that guy. I don't know what it was.

Q: Never, not in the early years?

Dill: No. And he seemed so different from Bob. I don't know what it was about Darryl. And I had met him a few times, but he always seemed very uptight and Bob was just out there man, take it or leave it.

Q: So then there's someone like you, you're not lovers with Bob, but you're very good buddies. So what do you do about that influence? If you see these people who were very close to them, it's like gravitational pull. So how do you balance that?

Dill: What I learned from Bob was work ethic. When I was in L.A. I was offered a position with a tenure track at UCLA [University of California, Los Angeles]. So I taught there for fifteen years, going back and forth and stuff like that. Meanwhile my work was doing well and all that. And the reason I got the job actually was—well, they were aware of my work and they said, “Can you get a letter of recommendation from anyone like a dean or something like that?” They needed it for their records.

So I called Rauschenberg and he wrote me a letter. Of course that got me the job. But then he called me and he says, “This doesn't mean you don't go back to work.” He had real work ethic. Most people see him as a kind of a happy-go-lucky—that was part of his work ethic as well because he would accept things and see if they worked, just the idea of objects working and the connotation of them working. We talked about that earlier. So I think all that goofing around and all that kind of stuff—of course the drinking made it a little bit difficult. But he was a workaholic. And all these places, like in Malibu when he rented that place for the summer or he was at Gemini or he was staying somewhere, he was always working—always working. I

remember one time he was in Chuck Arnoldi's studio and he just took these two—what do they call them, where you—sieves. The wire ones, the cheap ones you can buy on Canal Street?

Q: Yes.

Dill: He put them together so it made kind of a head and then wrapped them with some string that was there and just made the piece while he was just hanging out at Chuck's and then gave it to him. So he was always putting shit together. A lot of artists are like that though. But his work ethic was impeccable.

Q: And did you ever go to Captiva to see—

Dill: I never went to Captiva, no. I was going to go when he first moved in, but then he gave me this place so—

Q: Right. So do you have any other memories that you'd like to share about the last time you saw Bob or the last few times you saw—because you were continuing to see him here at Los Angeles galleries, I suppose.

Dill: Yes. But I would see Bob when he got a lot older. Mainly I'd run into him in places. And he changed physically. He stopped drinking Jack Daniel's, but he drank white wine like crazy. And he just gained some weight and he lost some hair. We were losing Bob here. And then he—did he pass away in L.A.?

Q: No he was in—

Dill: He almost did, I know that.

Q: He was in Florida, in Captiva.

Dill: He was in Captiva?

Q: In 2008.

Dill: Yes because I remember right around there, a little earlier actually, we had the same cardiologist. And I had a heart problem at one point, which was taken care of with a couple stents. But Bob had a real near miss and ended up over at Cedars[-Sinai Medical Center, Los Angeles]. They did some sort of emergency procedure on him and he came out if it and he was fine for at least the next year or so. But his system was definitely breaking down. But I don't know if his work ethic ever suffered. He always had something going. That whole thing about him wanting to show around the world, he was completely into that.

Q: The ROCI [Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange], the overseas—?

Dill: Yes, like he would show in—

Q: Oh yes. They had outposts in Mexico City, Venezuela, in Malaysia—all over the place.

Dill: He was very much into that. Yes, he wanted to—somehow he just wanted to see how his work, how people reacted to his work all over the world. So I don't think he had any kind of—what is that word, where you want to be famous everywhere? It wasn't like that. He was a guy that just liked to put things together in a certain way, but he was very smart and he understood the intellectual aspect of making art. And he also had a surprisingly astute memory for art history. It was always kind of whoa, that kind of thing, where he would draw from that.

Q: And he would bring this up in conversation?

Dill: Yes. I never said he had an astute—but he would bring up the tension between two objects and how that has gone through history.

Q: Yes, I wonder if we have some of those lectures, yes. I wonder if it got written down anywhere.

Dill: Hope so. Well, did he lecture? I don't remember him lecturing.

Q: I mean—no, it's possible, but I haven't read any transcripts like this.

Dill: When I asked him for that letter of recommendation, he didn't say oh yes, I'll be happy to do that; it was more like, "Okay, I'm going to do this, but then you have to get back to work." He

had a thing about organized education I think. I know he—I don't know if he ever finished college. I don't think so. I know he walked out of Kansas City Art Institute [Missouri].

Q: Right, Kansas City, Black Mountain [College, North Carolina].

Dill: Yes.

Q: He was in Paris prior to Kansas City. [Note: Rauschenberg used the GI Bill to study at the Académie Julian in Paris in 1948, after attending the Kansas City Art Institute in 1947.]

Dill: Oh, he did? Where did he—the Sorbonne or something like that?

Q: We'll have to look it up, yes. That's as much as I remember—I don't know. In any case, so he passes away in May of 2008. As we come to a conclusion here, if you wouldn't mind sharing your memory of that and the ripples of that in the art world at the time.

Dill: Oh, it was for me personally it was a big personal loss. Here's a guy that cared about me. He had millions of friends it seemed. But then he had a small group of friends too and I'd like to think maybe I was part of it for a period of time. He was awfully generous so I figured he must have liked me okay. And I sure like him. To this day I think he was the most charismatic guy I ever met. Because I knew Jasper pretty well too, but Jasper was much more intellectual in a sense, but not more intelligent—Jasper would talk in riddles. There would always be a riddle. And he was a big [René] Magritte guy and mislabeling things—that kind of thing. And that's all



Magritte. In his studio actually he had a collection of Magrittes and things. So he was really into the guy.

Q: But Bob?

Dill: But Bob was just kind of out there. And it was either a really triumphant moment or possibly a little embarrassing. He just went for it. He was an energy force. That's how I like it and I think that when I was in my twenties and thirties, I was very hyperactive like that. I think he related to that. He definitely didn't like getting old. And he was very—not verbal about it, but just in his actions, the fact that he had to humiliate himself to be walking on a walker. It just really bugged him.

Q: Yes, I've heard some of that. So at this point we—

Dill: I don't know if I gave you anything today.

Q: Oh no, absolutely. No, we've run through my outline. And I guess just finally whether you have any closing thoughts or a story that really is prime Bob or something like that that you feel we haven't touched on?

Dill: Oh, let me think. If I do, I'll email it to you. Well, he was a friend. He was so generous with me. It's not like his generosity had to prove to me that he was a friend; we were friends. We related on a certain level. And here's a guy that was so popular that probably at least a dozen

times a day people would go, “God, you’re amazing.” And we stayed away from that genre. But he was so—I keep saying he was so generous. He was. But he was not only generous with the physicalness like letting us use this place or whatever, but in his art. I’ve been staring at this black-and-white litho here [in the chapel].

Q: Yes, this is *Accident* [1963], which was—



Robert Rauschenberg  
*Accident*, 1963  
Lithograph  
41 1/4 x 29 1/2 inches (104.8 x 74.9 cm)  
From an edition of 29, published by Universal  
Limited Art Editions, West Islip, New York

Dill: Well, the paper got torn.

Q: Yes, the [lithography] stone actually, it broke.

Dill: Oh, the stone broke?

Q: Yes.

Dill: Whoa. But you can see from start to finish in his work; you can see the original lines almost—oh, you can. And then the process, everything is just all right there. One of the things that make Rauschenberg's prints exceptional—and I don't see that too much in contemporary art today—is Bob's prints were about the act of printing. He's making a comment on the print process. He was really into that, whereas other artists, I won't name them, but they're more like reproductions of paintings.

Q: Right, it's more like a—

Dill: But his prints are about prints.

Q: As opposed to a photocopy approach.

Dill: Yes or like the cheaper version or something like that. But his were all about printing. He was so comfortable on a stone. That's hard to make [Dill points to *Accident*].

Q: *Accident*, we're looking at.

Dill: Yes. That's beautiful actually.

Q: Well, that's perfect. Unless there's anything else you'd like to say?

Dill: Watch, I'll be—do you have a card?

Q: Yes, I do.

Dill: Oh wait, I have your number in my—

Q: If something goes rifting off, we can—

Dill: No, I'll get down to the corner see and I'll go, "Oh, wait a minute!"

Q: Well, I'll be here for at least a little bit longer. So for now we can close off this record. Thank you so much for your time, Laddie. I really appreciate it.

Dill: It was an honor to talk about Bob.

[INTERRUPTION]

Dill: I had a party.

Q: So we're going to do a brief postscript about—

Dill: I had a party at my studio—

Q: —a party that Laddie had.

Dill: —in Venice. And I used to sponsor this guy, a group of us threw a benefit for—he was quadriplegic. [Patrick] Pat Hogan, his name was. And Bob gave him, put something in, because he knew he was an L.A. artist and all that. So we had a party for it and Bob came. And then it was time for Pat to go home. Now this guy really only had a brain and then this poor emaciated body. And I remember Bob rolling him back to his studio, which was about a quarter of a mile down the alley and Chuck and I walked with him. And there was Bob pushing Pat, probably blew his mind. Having Bob—and Bob just kind of went—I said, “Oh, I’ll be right back, I want to take Pat home.” He says, “No, I want to roll him.” He was like that.

Q: Perfect.

Dill: Yes.

Q: Perfect.

[END OF INTERVIEW]