

ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The Reminiscences of

Fredericka Hunter

Columbia Center for Oral History Research

Columbia University

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## PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Fredericka Hunter conducted by Brent Edwards on September 16, 2015. 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.

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Session #1

Interviewee: Fredericka Hunter

Location: New York, New York

Interviewer: Brent Edwards

Date: September 16, 2015

Q: All right, so let's start. I am Brent Edwards and it is a real pleasure to be here at 381 Lafayette Street in New York. Today is September 16, 2015, and I'm here with Fredericka Hunter, who has been kind enough to do an oral history for the Rauschenberg Project. I wanted to ask you, as I said, to start at the beginning, if you'd be willing, and really to give us a bit of your own biography. If you're willing, tell us when and where you were born and a bit about your upbringing and then you can take us into your connection to the art world. But start at the beginning, if that's all right.

Hunter: Okay. I was born in 1946 in Galveston, Texas, which is called BOI—born on the island. I went through high school there. I have to tell one strange coincidence relating to Bob Rauschenberg. In Galveston my grandfather had started a printing company in the early 1900s to service both the city government and the port with printing, hand-printing, and specialty binding for bills of lading, shipping invoices, official records, and that sort of thing. This printing company had a number of employees. My father eventually took over the company, but there was an older man who worked there and he used to say that he had a nephew who was an artist. It took me about thirty or forty years to figure out that the nephew was Robert Rauschenberg because his name was Earl Matson and he was the brother or cousin to Dora Matson [later Rauschenberg], who was Bob's mother. She had been a Miss Splash Day, the bathing beauty, at some point for Galveston Island.

Q: Wow! You remember hearing this personally? So this would have been in what period, when he would have been saying, “I have a—”

Hunter: I must have been in my teens or just going off to college because I was going to study art history or something. “Oh, we have an artist in our family too.”

Q: [Laughs] So it would have been possibly early sixties, mid-sixties?

Hunter: Yes—

Q: Wow!

Hunter: —late fifties, early sixties.

Q: He never mentioned the name? He just said—

Hunter: No, he never said the name.

Q: That’s funny. Did you mention it to Rauschenberg later?

Hunter: [Laughs] Yes.

Q: Did you make the connection with him?

Hunter: Oh yes and of course to his mom because she was—

Q: You did?

Hunter: Yes.

Q: [Laughs] What did they say? Did they remember? Were they close to this particular relative?

[Laughter]

Hunter: That wasn't clear. I don't know whether Bob even knew him. But anyway, that was always a funny, funny-hanging, strange, coincidence. Anyway, after high school I went on to study art history at Wellesley College [Massachusetts] and got particularly interested in twentieth-century art. Wellesley College was not interested in twentieth-century art, even though Rosalind [E.] Krauss was my professor and there was a tremendous amount of activity going on around Color Field painting at Harvard [University, Cambridge, Massachusetts] and at Brandeis [University, Waltham, Massachusetts] and interesting shows and exhibitions and that sort of thing. But Wellesley College had said that if one wanted to pursue further studies, to get a Master's or whatever in art history, that one would have to study tesserae from Roman basilicas or maybe Northern Baroque painting, and I was completely entranced and infected and

passionate about twentieth-century art; specifically contemporary, post-1945, which of course was not taught in any university at the time.

Q: Did someone like Rosalind Krauss not teach contemporary work?

Hunter: No. She taught mostly about Cubism, early twentieth century, but she was writing for several reviews and we were aware of her writings about contemporary artists. I was lucky enough to have a roommate who probably knew more about art and was more sophisticated about New York City than I was and we would take the train from North Station [Boston] down to Grand Central [Terminal, New York] at midnight. We'd leave at midnight from Boston, get into Grand Central at about six o'clock in the morning, and then we actually went to galleries as college students.

Q: Wow and you would just spend the day in New York and—

Hunter: Yes.

Q: —then go back up? Wow.

Hunter: That would have been in '64, '65, '66. We saw [Jasper] Johns shows and Rauschenberg shows, and Donald ["Don"] Judd shows, gosh, Hans Hofmann, Kenneth Noland, all kinds of eclectic things, and then we'd go back to Wellesley. We were allowed to ask our professors to dinner, so we'd ask Rosalind to dinner and try to talk to her about what we had seen.

[Laughter]

Hunter: Of course she was writing in depth about David Smith at the time and it was a little bit controversial, but she gave us an amazing education. She was still at the Fogg [Museum, Harvard University], I think—at the museum studies program for a master’s degree or whatever. She was still there and Michael Fried was there and I think Barbara Rose was there. She just gave us all kinds of information and wonderful access. Wellesley College had all the back issues of the not very old *Artforum* and I devoured them all. In about 1967, the year of the revolution, I quit Wellesley and went to Houston, Texas, not back to Galveston, and I got a job working for Dominique de Menil [“Mrs. D”] at the University of St. Thomas in her art department. I completed my art history at the University of St. Thomas with this amazing group of scholars that she had amassed. There were about eight of us and eight professors, and she was doing her little shows at St. Thomas, influenced by, at that time, the deceased Jermaine [Virginia] MacAgy. They were bringing in all kinds of artists—[Claes] Oldenburg, [Andy] Warhol, Jean-Luc Godard, and students were asked to host. So I was immersed in this living art world at a Catholic university in Houston, Texas. How strange, right?

Q: [Laughs] Was that decision a dissatisfaction with Wellesley and—

Hunter: Yes. I found it very patronizing. For all of it being a women’s college, I found it patronizing and I was desperately interested in twentieth-century contemporary art. So it was like getting religion or something.

Q: Patronizing in terms of the presuppositions about the intellectual capacities of women, in that sense?

Hunter: Well or just what your chances were in the world too. Not so much about the intellectual capabilities, but what you could aspire to. You could get close to money but you didn't make money. That kind of thing. It was a conservative kind of—

Q: Well, I know enough about the history of the women's liberal arts colleges in the northeast to understand what that environment would have been like. Had you been aware of the de Menils before you went back?

Hunter: No. No, my brother-in-law, Eugene Aubry, was partners with an architect named Howard Barnstone who was a key part of the de Menil world and that's how I probably got the job. Mrs. D just gave me all kinds of tasks in the library, gallery sitting and what have you, and then I finished up my art history classes. She even taught one. [Dr. William A.] Bill Camfield, the leading expert on [Francis] Picabia, was there, fresh out of Yale [University, New Haven, Connecticut] and a fabulous man named Mino Badner, who died very young, but who was an expert in what we then called primitive art, but Pre-Columbian, Northwest Coast, whatever. When you were embraced into the de Menil family, you were embraced into most of the family. So you got to know all of them at that time.

Q: Right. Well, John de Menil passed away not long after that.



Hunter: '73.

Q: '73.

Hunter: Right, he had prostate cancer and passed away. But once you were in that group and since they believed that students should participate in everything, you were included in all receptions, dinners, whatever. Anyway, it was very expansive and through it weird things happened. Like one of the two people at St. Thomas was [Frederick W.] Fred Hughes, who went on to become the manager of Andy Warhol. Andy came frequently to Houston. Mr. [John] de Menil adored him. The other person who was at the University of St. Thomas also at the same time was a student named Mayo Thompson. He will appear in this history because he eventually moved to New York and became Bob's assistant with his soon-to-be wife, the conceptual artist Christine Kozlov, and they traveled to Israel together with Bob.

Q: Oh yes, Okay, in the seventies.

Hunter: But Mayo was a homegrown Houston person, and he and [Frederick] Rick Barthelme and Steve Cunningham formed a noise band in the late-sixties called the Red Krayola with a K.

[Laughter]

Hunter: It is a cult band to this day, even though only Mayo is the core practitioner. He will be having a show at Greene Naftali [New York] this year [*Mayo Thompson*, 2015]. He was in the Whitney [Museum of American Art, New York] Biennial as the Red Krayola but he was also interlinked, in the strange way things are, with Bob Rauschenberg.

Q: Very interesting. [Laughs]

Hunter: The Red Krayola was the influence, along with the 13th Floor Elevators, for Mike Kelley and Tony Oursler and Jim Shaw with Destroy All Monsters and the Poetics, the noise band.

Q: So how big was the scene around the de Menils? How many students are you talking about when—

Hunter: In the art department?

Q: Yes.

Hunter: There must have been a dozen of us. There's a picture somewhere with all of us gathered on the lawn behind Mrs. de Menil. Then Mrs. de Menil split with St. Thomas because the priests didn't want John Cage to become a lay board member on this Basilian-run university. They thought the revolution was coming too.



Dominique de Menil (center) with students, faculty, and staff of the art department, University of St. Thomas, Houston, 1968. Back row: Pat Toomey, Rodney Marionneaux, Betsy McMillan, Susan J. Barnes, Fredericka Hunter, Philip Oliver-Smith, Kathryn Davidson, Elsa Ross, Edith Coles, Mary Jane Victor, Arthur Courtmanche, Shelby Miller, unidentified person, and Goran Milutinovic; front row: Helen Winkler, L. D. Dreyer, Kathy La Roche, Geraldine Aramanda, Elizabeth Donaldson, William A. Camfield, Lois Thornhill, Zorina Najarian, and Barry Kaplan. Photo: The Menil Collection, Houston, courtesy Fredericka Hunter

[Laughter]

Hunter: So she took everything she had, picked up her whole art department, and went to Rice University [Houston] and integrated into the—

Q: What year was that?

Hunter: In 1969, she took with her at the time Thomas McEvelley, who she had hired. He went on to write all the art criticism for *Artforum* and he was a classical scholar teaching mythology.

Q: In terms of the people who would go on to be closely associated with Rauschenberg, were there other folks in that circle? I'm thinking of someone like Susan Davidson. Would she have

been around by then or did she come into the Menil circle later? I know that you and she go way back.

Hunter: Well but, because she's the daughter of the lady we always tried to drive nuts as students. I don't know how old Susan would have been then. But Elsie Cousins is her mother and Elsie was basically the be-all to Mr. de Menil and then Mrs. de Menil. [Note: Susan Davidson's tenure at the Menil was from 1985 to 2002.]

Q: I see.

Hunter: So Susan is just naturally connected with the whole thing. But we were a bit older. We were naughtier. We tried to drive Elsie nuts, act badly, and that would include Fred Hughes, and there was a guy named Karl Kilian. Anyway, but in the midst of all of this, working for Mrs. de Menil, my boyfriend at the time, Ian Glennie, and now my partner at Texas Gallery [Houston]—I met him and he was studying architecture and art history at Rice. It was a five-year architecture program at Rice and you had to do one year at an architectural firm. He was here at [Ieoh Ming] I. M. Pei and I got a job working for Richard [L.] Feigen so I could come along. Mrs. de Menil agreed to give me some credits for going to work at a gallery. Do you love that?

Q: What year would that have been?

Hunter: That would have been '68, '69, right after I got out of Wellesley and into Houston.

Q: Well that was a question I was about to ask. In terms of what you might call paths not taken, given that those trips down to the gallery shows, the museums, and the city sound like they had been so formative, why would you go back to Texas rather than making the jump to New York?

Hunter: Well, there were family reasons. There was a relative who was very ill, whatever, but I didn't want to go back to Galveston and there was an opportunity in Houston. There was a burgeoning art scene. There was James Johnson Sweeney at the Museum of Fine Arts [Houston] and all kinds of funny little things going on and—

Q: It got you to New York anyway.

Hunter: Then I ended up coming back to the city and living here for about a year-and-a-half working for Richard Feigen. He actually opened the first gallery in SoHo, not Paula Cooper. Chuck Close can back me up on this, 141 Greene [Street].

Q: That was the first one?

Hunter: Yes. Richard L. Feigen. [Hunter postscript: I believe Richard along with Leo Castelli and Charles Cowles bought 420 W. Broadway as storage and extra gallery space at that time prior to the active gallery at 141 Greene St.]

Q: Do you remember what year he opened it?

Hunter: Yes. I had to put in the floor and had the banner made and things like that. I was the gallery girl.

Q: So was it '69? What year?

Hunter: '68, '69. I'd have to check it. Then Paula Cooper moved in. She had been at Park Place, which didn't qualify quite as SoHo, and then—

Q: Well, people do usually say that she's the first, I think.

Hunter: She's not. You can call Chuck.

Q: [Laughs] I believe you and—

Hunter: He will tell you.

Q: —now we've got it in the oral history. We've got it in the record. [Note: Michael Findlay, the director of the Richard L. Feigen Gallery at 141 Greene St. confirms that the gallery's first season was in 1968 with an exhibition of the sign painter paintings by John Baldessari. For the record, other employees at the downtown gallery were Billy Sullivan, Brian Potier, and Julian Pretto, while Sandra Leonard Starr was director of the uptown space.]

[Laughter]

Hunter: Of course we spent quite a bit of time at Max's Kansas City, just because that was what people did and of course one saw Bob Rauschenberg there.

Q: Had you met—well, you had met Warhol.

Hunter: Oh yes. We knew Andy through the connection with the de Menils and Fred Hughes.

Q: So going back to Houston, in terms of your affiliation with the artists coming through, who would you have met in—

Hunter: I don't remember Bob being part of that time that I was there, though his relationship with the de Menils was early and close, and one of great fondness. I do remember in the late sixties coming to a reception here at 381 after perhaps an opening. I didn't really know Bob or anything. We just admired him, though at Max's Kansas City there was sort of a division in the space.

Q: The back room?

Hunter: The back room.

Q: [Laughs] Yes. Were you in the back room?

Hunter: Hippies and gays and transvestites and whatever ended up in the back, or if you just didn't want to bother to be really macho, you were in the back, and that's where we would see someone like Bob. We were star-struck.

Q: So you wouldn't describe yourself as part of the scene?

Hunter: No, no. We had our own group of younger people, which included people like Robert Mapplethorpe and some of the Warhol entourage because of Fred Hughes. So Jackie Curtis would be at the table or Holly Woodlawn [née Haroldo Santiago Franceschi Rodriguez Danhaki] or Rita—

Q: Lou Reed?

Hunter: Rita Redd. No. David Croland, who did the covers of *Interview*. No, it was a kinkier group.

Q: The people like Mapplethorpe and Patti Smith—those people were part of that scene too?

Hunter: Yes, sort of. I don't remember Patti being there so much because Robert came with David Croland, as I remember, rather than Patti, to that. But it was quite a mix.

Q: [Laughs] I believe it and this is the period—



Hunter: You would pass through to the front part, [Forrest] Frosty Myers and maybe [John] Chamberlain and a few other burlier types. Brice [Marden] would be in the front and the back. Helen [Marden, née Harrington], his wife, was a waitress there. They weren't married or whatever yet. There was kind of an enforced law because we had three friends and artists: an artist named Robin Bruch, an artist named Stephen Mueller, and a marvelous woman named Delia Doherty, who really were pushing the kind of avant-garde look, and I know Mickey [Ruskin] didn't like their looks. They all shaved their heads and their eyebrows at one point and he got very upset. So they were banished to the back. They couldn't sit in the front.

Q: [Laughs] With the cool people.

[Laughter]

Q: You were saying before we started this, this is the period when you're living on the Upper West Side.

Hunter: Yes.

Q: So you would come down to work and then after work you would go out—

Hunter: Right.

Q: —for drinks at a place like Max's.

Hunter: Don't forget drugs. I remember distinctly in the blizzard of 1969, at that point I was also working uptown for Richard. He had a place in what is now the Mark hotel. He had a gallery there. He had moved out of Eighty-first Street and Klaus Kertess and the Bykert [Gallery] had moved into Eighty-first Street. He'd moved into the Mark and he was building his fancy place on Seventy-ninth Street, the Hans Hollein building. We were all stuck in little offices at the bottom of what is now the Mark, formerly the Hyde Park Hotel.

Q: Where is the Mark hotel?

Hunter: It's at 25 East Seventy-seventh between Madison Avenue and Fifth Avenue. It's the fancy one. Anyway it was not a fancy hotel at the time. It wasn't a boutique hotel. It was just an Upper East Side hotel, sort of generic, and he had rented offices in the first floor, which is kind of typical when you look at the first floor around the Carlyle. It's just right around the corner from the Carlyle. In fact I had lunch with Michael Findlay, who was my boss at 141 Greene Street, and he's now at Acquavella [Galleries, New York]. He used to be head of contemporary at Christie's. I had lunch with him in the bottom of the Mark recently and he said, "You know, we're sitting in my office."

[Laughter]

Q: Wow! How the world changes.

Hunter: But in 1969 there was a huge blizzard. I was uptown at Richard Feigen and [Richard] Dick Bellamy and I walked across in the blizzard and I was just so impressed that I was walking across—

[Laughter]

Hunter: —with Dick Bellamy. I went on to become good friends with him until the end. We played tennis together. We walked across in this great blizzard. Well of course being that age, I got home. My boyfriend, Ian, was there. What are we going to do? We're going to go out.

[Laughter]

Hunter: And no one shut down anything. We got on the train, went down to the West Side and got the Canarsie line across and went to Max's in the blizzard, and people were still serving that terrible food and people were there.

Q: [Laughs] Of course. Do you remember? If you can describe your perception of the scene of the art world in that period, the way you're describing it sounds stratified at least by generation, that you're part of the beginnings of a burgeoning SoHo gallery scene. You're friends with some of the up and coming. Now we think of them—like Mapplethorpe we think of as a legendary figure, but he was really up and coming and it sounds like—

Hunter: Or Brice, yes.

Q: It sounds like there's a distinction in your mind in that period between where you all are in age, but also in prominence, part of this scruffy scene.

Hunter: Those guys were heroes. The older guys were heroes already.

Q: Well that's what I mean and people like the Warhols, the Jasper Johnses, the Rauschenbergs—

Hunter: This was a big deal. They were our stars and we were thrilled to be close to them or in the same room or whatever. It just was sheer pleasure.

Q: So Max's was one of the places where you could rub elbows with that—

Hunter: The art world was pretty small. You rubbed elbows a lot of places.

[Laughter]

Hunter: You probably could have counted how many people were really in the art world then. What I was going to say is that I do remember coming to 381 not really knowing Bob, but the parties were sometimes quite open-ended. People just arrived. I think I was probably invited by Mayo Thompson at the time to come to a party. So again, this was important. We came here and we went up to the third floor and the sarcophagus—the mummy was there.

[Laughter]

Hunter: The turtle was there. All these things were wondrous.

Q: Really exciting. Did you think about living downtown at all?

Hunter: Not until the late-seventies or eighties, when I did have a place on Wooster [Street] down by Canal [Street]. We rented a place there for a while as a pied-à-terre for Houston. When I went back to Houston after my years here, I was back and forth a lot of the time. Billy Sullivan, the artist who also worked at Richard Feigen, became a really good friend. He and his wife had a house in Wainscott, Long Island and then sometimes we would go for the summer out there because it cost zero to go out there and no one was out there. Again it was very much an artist colony. You knew where [Willem] de Kooning was. You might meet him at a friend's house and have a conversation with him at John Eastman's or [Emilie] Mimi Kilgore's house or something. You knew Jane Freilicher was there and you went to the cemetery to look at the Jackson Pollock rock.

[Laughter]

Hunter: It was imbued with a certain amount of spirit of the poets and the artists, and there were open potato fields and pheasants running around. It was all very—

Q: In this period it sounds like, although you actually came to 381—

Hunter: I did.

Q: It doesn't sound like you had had any kind of real one-on-one conversation with Rauschenberg by this point.

Hunter: No.

Q: Were there any of those stars, the legendary figures, that you would have really had a tête-à-tête with by that point?

Hunter: Not by that point, but by being on Long Island in the summer, we would have dinner sometimes with Roy Lichtenstein or someone like that. But it was mostly my own age group. Klaus Kertess is a very close friend. In fact as a student I had gone to his gallery on Fifty-seventh Street and then a little bit later, when I was working in New York, gone to his gallery on Eighty-first Street. I actually had some nascent dealer tendencies at the time and had helped a friend in Houston buy a Lynda Benglis or something. Anyway—

Q: So you were starting to get involved in—

Hunter: Right and so Klaus of course introduced us to people, but then again whoever was working at the gallery was usually an artist and you met them and got to be friends with them.

Q: In this period was Ian still doing architecture—

Hunter: Yes.

Q: —or did he start getting involved in the galleries?

Hunter: Well, he was doing architecture. But then at a certain point he decided architecture was not very interesting. It was a painful situation. He had to deal with clients.

[Laughter]

Q: There is that.

Hunter: We ended up by mistake becoming involved in a gallery in Houston, a very young gallery that was selling prints.

Q: Why do you say by mistake?

Hunter: It was by mistake. It wasn't a plan. It wasn't a career plan. I was studying filmmaking at Rice University at the Media Center next to the now demolished [Art] Barn [Martel Center] because I thought that after my art history degree, I would study filmmaking. Then I found out girls weren't really allowed in the film world and that was a shock. Ian was doing some

architecture and a friend was working for two wealthy guys who had started a little gallery selling prints in Houston. This friend said, “Oh, they need help. They need to know more about what’s going on in the art world. You guys have been in New York. You know stuff.” Anyway, the next thing you know, I’m a partner in this gallery because an aunt had died and given me—I don’t know—five thousand dollars and I bought into this gallery. Then in a year or two, I have the gallery and they’re gone. The rich guys are gone. It’s just all bizarre.

Q: So it wasn’t a deliberate thought-out, planned-out decision-making process. You sort of backed into—

Hunter: Yes. I was twenty-six years old.

Q: Thinking back to your SoHo days when you’re what you described as the gallery girl, were there any aspirations there? Did you ever think wow, I want to have a gallery one day?

Hunter: No.

Q: No? Not at all?

Hunter: No. In fact working for Richard probably could have convinced you not to have a gallery.

Q: [Laughs] Why? Because it was—



Hunter: I love Richard, but I have to tell you, you learned everything. He sold to the stars and all kinds of crazy stuff went on. He was a great supporter of Ray Johnson. We met Ray Johnson very early on. He was a great supporter for [James] Rosenquist. We met Rosenquist very early on because that's who came in and out of the gallery. It was fantastic. He had a great John Baldessari show, probably the first one of the sign painter paintings. I was a gallery girl for that. I have a photo to prove it.



Fredericka Hunter at Feigen Gallery, New York, in front of John Baldessari's *Quality Material* (1966–68), 1968. Photo: Dean Brown, courtesy Fredericka Hunter

Q: [Laughs] But the business side of it turned you off. You weren't—

Hunter: It wasn't so much the business side. I don't know exactly what turned me off, but it kind of was—well it was very unstructured; everything about it was unstructured. Everything was speculative and also it was hierarchical but non-hierarchical in a certain way. Everybody had to

do—like I had to put in a floor. I'd never put in a floor before. You just get to do this or go pick up Richard's car that the janitor gambled away last night in New Jersey or whatever. It just had all these aspects—

[Laughter]

Hunter: —that were chaotic. Then I went back to Houston and I ended up with a gallery. But because of my time at Richard Feigen, because of the time hanging out in Max's, I suddenly had a whole network, which is what you would call it now. But I knew artists and many of them were young and needing support and totally unknown. They were selling wonderful things and challenging things and beautiful things that were cheaper than the prints we were supposed to be selling.

Q: This is, I know, a long time ago but if you can be as specific as possible with the dates, this is '70, '71. When did you go back to study film?

Hunter: In '70, but then about '71 I'm moving into a gallery. Time telescopes also at that age.

Q: Definitely.

Hunter: You do things. It might seem like a long time but you really didn't do them that long. But now it seems like—

Q: But the period of the buying into the gallery and the shared ownership was very short.

Hunter: Was very short.

Q: Very short meaning months?

Hunter: Yes or a year or something, and finishing at St. Thomas, getting my degree; but it was really at Rice because Mrs. de Menil moved the— Anyway just, that's the way life is, quite.

Q: Did you even do a semester's worth of film studies? Did you drop that pretty quickly or did you—

Hunter: No, no. I had done a semester, starting at St. Thomas under [Gerald] Gerry O'Grady. Mr. and Mrs. de Menil had set him up with a film program at St. Thomas. He had been teaching [Geoffrey] Chaucer at Rice and ended up teaching film at St. Thomas. Every night class consisted of seeing three to four films. He loved to expound on [Ingmar] Bergman and the symbols, the iconography of Bergman. But then we would see Jack Smith or avant-garde films.

Q: Was it production-oriented or was it more of a film scholarship, film studies—

Hunter: Film studies. Then Gerry of course went on to SUNY [State University of New York] Buffalo, where I think he became head of the department or whatever in film studies with Paul [Jeffrey] Sharits. All that gets mixed up. Gerry's still alive and an amazing man, an amazing

scholar. But there was a hands-on film program when they moved to Rice. There was actually a hands-on film program run by a man named James Blue, who had been at the American Film Institute, AFI, and also did propaganda films for the United States. James Blue came down and I learned film editing and sound syncing and all that old-fashioned stuff before there was a digital process.

Q: So you did that kind of hands-on—

Hunter: I did the hands-on.

Q: Well let me get you—

Hunter: So all those things just mush together. There's no clarity. The next time I encountered Bob Rauschenberg though is in this strange moment in the early seventies in Texas where culture started to take these bigger leaps. All in a matter of a couple years the Museum of Fine Arts added a new wing [1974], the Contemporary Arts Museum [Houston] built a new building [1972], and in Corpus Christi, Philip [C.] Johnson built the Art Museum of South Texas. The opening shows at the Art Museum of South Texas were curated by David Whitney. The opening show was in 1972 and the second one in 1974. [Note: Rauschenberg's work was included in *Eight Artists*, 1974.]

Q: Do you remember what year that was?

Hunter: I'm going to guess '73 but I'm not sure. I'm not sure. But I have great photos of Irving Blum and Barbara Jakobson and David Whitney and [David] Dave Hickey and everybody hanging out at the gala. These are all from the 1972 opening show.

Q: I was looking through the chronology of exhibitions and thinking about his presence in Texas and the first show that I saw that passed through was the Dante [Alighieri]'s *Inferno* illustrations [Dante drawings, 1958–60] in '64, which went to Southwest Texas State College in San Marcos [note: exhibition traveled to that venue in 1966].

Hunter: Oh, I didn't know that. That I didn't know.

Q: Then in the eighties it's the contemporary and it's with you.

Hunter: Of course, that giant Kennedy piece went to the Art Museum of South Texas after the World's Fair [New York, 1964–65]—the outdoor piece that was at the World's Fair [*Skyway*, 1964].



Robert Rauschenberg

*Skyway*, 1964

Oil and silkscreen ink on canvas

216 x 192 inches (548.6 x 487.7 cm)

Dallas Museum of Art

The Roberta Coke Camp Fund, The 500, Inc.,  
Mr. and Mrs. Mark Shepherd Jr. and General  
Acquisitions Funds

Q: Oh yes.

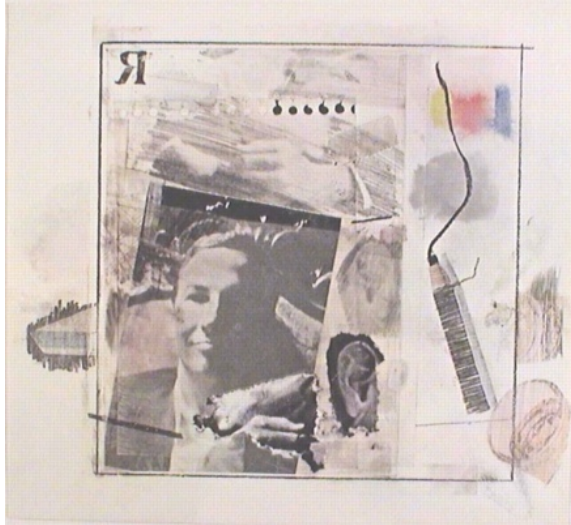
Hunter: That's now at Dallas [Museum of Art].

Q: You think it was early seventies?

Hunter: I could be off but I think early seventies. It would have been a group show. David Whitney did two group shows [at the Art Museum of South Texas]. I had met David Whitney and David White, both at Leo Castelli's gallery when I was a student and bought a Robert Rauschenberg poster.

[Laughter]

Hunter: I still have it. It was the Dwan Gallery poster [Untitled (Dwan Gallery poster, self-portrait), 1965] and Ivan [C.] Karp sold it to me. But David White was there and I met him and David Whitney too.



Robert Rauschenberg  
Untitled [Dwan Gallery poster, self-portrait],  
1965  
Offset lithograph

[INTERRUPTION]

Hunter: [Note: speaking about *Eight Artists*, Art Museum of South Texas, 1974] I could be totally wrong but I swear it was the early seventies and Bob was wearing—because it was the *Venetians* [1972–73] and *Sor Aqua* was in it and some of the most amazing pieces he's made. We were just blown away. Don Judd had plywood pieces there at the time and they were shocking to everyone. I could be conflating two shows because David Whitney did two shows. Anyway, these pieces were stunning.



Robert Rauschenberg  
*Sor Aqua (Venetian)*, 1973  
Water-filled bathtub, wood, metal, rope, and glass-jug  
98 x 120 x 41 inches (248.9 x 304.8 x 104.1 cm)  
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston  
Gift of the Caroline Wiess Law Foundation

Q: You remember him being there at that time?

Hunter: Right, he was there and we went to a party at someone's house whose name I can't remember right now. But I think Bob was in that phase where he was wearing buckskin—

[Laughter]

Hunter: —and he sort of looked like Buffalo Bob; kind of a chamois suit is what it was, a Western-looking Native American I don't know—





Rauschenberg in Philip Johnson's Glass House, New Canaan, Connecticut, ca. 1970s

[Laughter]

Hunter: —kind of cliché chamois suit. We got to hang out with him. Now again, I was not close to him then. It was just adoration.

Q: Did you have conversations?

Hunter: Oh yes.

Q: Did you have—in a direct—

Hunter: It was in someone's private house and we all were just thrilled to be talking to him. I don't remember anything about it except that we were just wowed.

At this print gallery that became the art gallery that I have now, we did carry Bob's *Stoned Moon* series [1969–70] from Gemini [G.E.L., Los Angeles].

Q: From California.

Hunter: Right, so we had Rauschenberg prints because we had an affiliation with Gemini and a couple of others, ULAE [Universal Limited Art Editions, West Islip, New York], that sort of thing. So I knew that work.

Q: You really opened in '71 or you took over in '71.

Hunter: Right.

Q: Was it called—

Hunter: Contract Graphics.

Q: Contract?

Hunter: Contract. That was made up by those guys because they were going to provide prints to all the new buildings in town on contract.

Q: Okay and you pretty quickly, when you took over, changed the name. [Laughs]

Hunter: To Texas Gallery, which was probably just as lame, but I think Ed Ruscha suggested it because he was one of our first shows. That's all sidelight stuff about those connections, how it happened. That my ex-partner, R. H. Donnelley Erdman III, was from Santa Barbara and knew Brooke Alexander and then the next thing you know we're showing Ruscha prints and then we're talking to Ed Ruscha and we're showing Ed Ruscha. He's saying, "Who are you guys?"

[Laughter]

Q: Was there any planning at that point?

Hunter: No.

[Laughter]

Q: Was it really just the two of you—

Hunter: Yes. And with one good-natured assistant.

Q: —who were running it?

Hunter: Yes. I painted the walls, drove the truck, and—

[Laughter]

Hunter: —made the frames.

Q: The idea was to continue to specialize in prints?

Hunter: No, no, no, just—

Q: How did you think about that—what you would handle?

Hunter: Oh, I thought that that was a losing proposition because at the time prints were getting to be fifteen hundred dollars or twenty-five hundred dollars and no one was buying into that. I knew younger artists making things for a lot less.

Q: So you were thinking to draw on what you were describing as your network—

Hunter: Yes.

Q: —to go back to those folks you knew.

Hunter: Right and to keep expanding that and to work with living artists. Again art history had taught me one thing, which is that I don't want to write my own version of art history. I feel

more reassured too as a dealer if I really know where things came from and who made them, and the idea of supporting living people and knowing what they're thinking and how it gets made. That's all way more interesting to me: how the process works, what are they thinking in their heads. Somehow or another, growing up in Galveston, whatever streak it is, artists seemed more normal to me, at least at that time—post-hippie, early seventies mix of political things going on and—

Q: Yes, I understand.

Hunter: —post-revolution ideas.

Q: Post-68.

Hunter: Yes. It will always be a huge influence in my life, living through that specific time—that and the civil rights movement, the most important things that ever could have happened. My parents went through World War I. They went through the Depression. They went through World War II. But the defining thing for someone of my generation was '68 and certainly then, the most important thing was civil rights. So consequently that idea of a more open situation for living and making a living with the—and I don't think we over lauded the creative thing either, but what is the best idealistically maybe—what's the best of humans? Of course the downtown scene was intertwined with music and dance.

Q: In that period?

Hunter: Yes, very much so.

Q: That was one thing I was going to ask you. I was, as best I could, trying to get a sense of what the gallery scene would have been like in that period in Houston in the seventies, and I was reading, just tracking some of the histories of the galleries there. The Moody Gallery was founded.

Hunter: It still exists.

Q: Archway [Gallery]. There are some that are founded in the mid-seventies.

Hunter: A more appropriate example would be Tibor de Nagy Gallery in Houston which became Watson/de Nagy, the Meredith Long Gallery, Janie C. Lee Gallery, and Moody Gallery. There was quite a little clutch of them at the time.

Q: So in '71, if you had to describe, looking back, the landscape, are you—

Hunter: Of Houston?

Q: Is this a Wild West? Yes, in Houston.

Hunter: Right.

Q: Are you on your own or do you feel like you're part of a network and a junior member of a gallery scene?

Hunter: Not well-defined at all. There had been galleries in the sixties: Louise Ferrari, the New Gallery, and the Louisiana Gallery that had shown artists who were living and working there, and also Louise Ferrari had been influential in bringing very wonderful paintings to the de Menils, to the Sarofims—Franz Kline, important Mark Rothkos, important works she brokered. So there was always an incredible exchange between New York and Houston, including the rumor at one point, I think someone from Houston or Dallas funded Paula Cooper. There was always a kind of natural connection. A lot of artists went back and forth. Brice Marden, when he got a summer job, came to Houston; at some point he lived on Polk Street.

I think it was partly the burgeoning wildcatters. You could say that socially they wanted to be part of a larger cultural scene; they were aspirational and they had money to burn. But Houston has a unique quality from Dallas in that it is less defined, more open, less tied to the Bible Belt, less judgmental as a whole, and as certain families got very, very rich, they were very, very generous to all the institutions and the institutions in New York as well. I think there was a switch early in the seventies as these big institutions became more solidified and more professional and not so homegrown, partly led by Mr. and Mrs. de Menil providing a more international or cosmopolitan viewpoint. But James Johnson Sweeney coming into the Museum of Fine Arts, Henry [T.] Hopkins with the Fort Worth Art Museum, Harry [S.] Parker [III] in Dallas, and Richard Brown also in Fort Worth. It wasn't focused just on that place. The earlier

galleries, the ones that had been around in the sixties, where we went to the openings as students—they had started to change and then certain galleries started to morph or start to come up. Betty Moody had worked for another gallery and then started her own. Meredith Long—

Q: Would you say those Houston–New York connections were developing in this very period or did they pre-exist?

Hunter: I think they pre-existed.

Q: So in terms of your place, you weren't thinking I have a trump card because I'm hooked up with New York. Houston was already hooked up with New York.

Hunter: Right, but there were still people in Houston who thought that having clean white spaces was very New York or very snobby. But then a lot of people thought it was perfectly normal.

Dave Hickey had a gallery in Austin in '71, '72 or something like that and we would go see him and we traded things back and forth. He of course called it A Clean, Well-Lighted Place [1967–70].

Q: [Laughs] Of course.

Hunter: Was that an [Ernest Miller] Hemingway quote? Yes.

Q: Yes.



Hunter: I think so.

Q: Yes, it is.

Hunter: He was actually a literature major. He had done his thesis on Hemingway.

Q: Well, that's where you get it.

Hunter: [Laughs] But anyway, so—

Q: So in defining your niche—that's what I'm trying to get a sense of.

Hunter: Okay. Again it was inadvertent—the only niche we fell into was the fact that we showed artists from the West Coast and New York in an even-handed way, along with people working in town because I felt that you couldn't have a gallery that didn't work with some of the artists that were working in your own neighborhood.

Q: But that range was relatively unusual in Houston in that period?

Hunter: Evidently the West Coast was. I would say the West Coast was pretty unusual in a lot of places.

Q: The Gemini G.E.L. connection predated you or was that through—

Hunter: It predated me. That's when the two partners—

Q: They had already been connected to the—

Hunter: Right and that was a big time of prints. People did a lot. There was a lot of activity; again a spurt, an awareness of—because both Rauschenberg and Johns were making prints then.

Q: Well *Stoned Moon*, in terms of showing Rauschenberg, would that have been the first series that would have come through when you were involved?



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

Hunter: I don't—

Q: I mean, you wouldn't have been behind it.

Hunter: No, no, and because it was the *Stoned Moon* and it was about Houston in a way, a connection to NASA [National Aeronautics and Space Administration], and it was said to be the largest print made at a single pull. [Note: referring to *Sky Garden (Stoned Moon)* and *Waves (Stoned Moon)*, the two longest prints in the series at 89 inches tall.]

Q: I guess there is a Houston connection [laughs] yes.

Hunter: Which was why they wanted to show it and why we had them all. We had the whole series. I think at the time we had to buy them. There wasn't consignment.

Q: That was normal? That was the way it worked?

Hunter: Yes. You had to buy the portfolio. It was like a subscription.

Q: That would mean if you weren't able to sell a decent amount—

Hunter: Correct.

Q: —you were taking a big loss.

Hunter: Yes.

Q: So it's a very risky proposition.

Hunter: Right and you had to frame them and you had to do—a gallery is always like that though.

Q: In what sense?

Hunter: There's no guarantee on anything and you have a lot of upfront expenses.

Q: Right. Well it sounds like the financial aspect of it is a little frightening. [Laughs]

Hunter: It always has been and no matter what one thinks about it, even today it's still true.

Q: How successful was it in those early years as you took over? You invested in it so I assume you must have seen some future in it.

Hunter: Right. We did well for a while and the early seventies for Houston weren't too good. Houston went through several big downturns and things really scaled back. But we did again have this energy coming from these institutions. Eventually we started getting graduate school programs, which weren't there. That sort of thing started to give a real depth and background to a constant force of art culture.

Q: In terms of your clients, you were selling to maybe not the de Menils but another level of relatively wealthy collector in that area.

Hunter: People even came from Dallas or Fort Worth, or we went to Fort Worth and sold to the museum or the clients there; Sid [Richardson] Bass people. Mrs. de Menil was there very early. She bought some. She actually bought a set of Bruce Conner *Dennis Hopper One Man Show* prints [1971–73]. She was actually quite active.

Q: Through this period, through the seventies?

Hunter: Right. She was supportive. They were supportive of anything that seemed a young effort. But I have to go back. One more thing—you mentioned the Dante drawings. As a student—and I am not the only person I have heard say this—I have heard many people in the art world from my generation say this. One of the most important things that ever happened to me was to go, as a student, into the Museum of Modern Art [MoMA, New York] and Dante's *Inferno* was in that little gallery when you used to go in the old door. You went in and there was a little dark gallery to the left. Dante's *Inferno* was in there. I went berserk.



Robert Rauschenberg  
*Canto XXXI: The Central Pit of Malebolge, the Giants*, from the series *Thirty-Four Illustrations for Dante's Inferno*, 1959–60  
Solvent transfer on paper with colored pencil, gouache, and pencil  
14 1/2 x 11 1/2 inches (36.8 x 29.2 cm)  
The Museum of Modern Art, New York  
Given anonymously

Q: Really? I don't think I would have gone into it in that period.

Hunter: I was an eighteen-year-old or something and I was just seeing everything I could see in the whole wide world and I'd never lived in a town with museums. Boston was amazing because of the [Museum of] Fine Arts and the Busch-Reisinger [Museum, Harvard University] and the Fogg and the Isabella Stewart Gardner [Museum]. I don't know how many classes I ever attended because I think I was mostly in the museums. Maybe that's one reason I had to drop out.

[Laughter]

But I remember distinctly and I was by myself and—

Q: In college?

Hunter: Yes, in college, by myself in New York and I don't remember the year, perhaps 1966, they were exhibited. I think they were exhibited twice. [Note: *Rauschenberg: 34 Drawings for Dante's Inferno*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1965–66; the next time the entire group was exhibited at MoMA was in *Drawing Now*, 1976.] Again, you had your epiphany, right, or where you grasp something you haven't grasped before or you make some connection on some level that sometimes you end up taking for granted later, but still. I've heard other artists, other curators or museum directors, again my generation, saying when they saw Rauschenberg for the first time, it changed their lives.

Q: Can you articulate what that insight would be, what you understood that you hadn't understood before?

Hunter: Well, it was challenging. It was fairly complicated, probably on the visual level and the amount of information you were getting. Again, you're probably presented with—what is this, what does it mean, how does it get this way—which are sort of questions that always come up when something you're unfamiliar with— It also, in my opinion, should be able to be a little bit over your head so you don't really know what's going on. They were just stunning and it was just stunning to see those. And it's probably why I went up and paid \$25 for the Dwan poster from Leo Castelli. Ivan Karp made an elaborate show of selling me the Dwan poster—almost comedic and definitely delightful.

[Laughter]

Q: Well, it was probably worth it in the long run.

[Laughter]

Hunter: But that's—the Dante drawings are like—

Q: An epiphany moment.

Hunter: Yes because Boston [Museum of] Fine Arts had also had their giant [Henri] Matisse show when I was there and again that's another one of those things that happens. What do you do about this? Or the Isabella Stewart Gardner—at the time the [Johannes] Vermeer was sitting there and you were told to go sit in front of it with a little flashlight. Or you went to the Fogg and they had just bought a little Rembrandt [van Rijn] that was under question about whether it was the head of Christ, when it turns out that he did these beautiful paintings of a non-blonde Christ, which Philadelphia did a gorgeous show for a couple years ago. But these kinds of things, where you were just presented with suddenly, oh my god. There were philosophical challenges. There were visual challenges. *Washington Color Painters* at Brandeis; *Three American Painters* at Fogg.

Q: Well, I'm glad I mentioned the Dante drawings to get the fact that that was an epiphany moment for you. This period, if I can take you back into narrating the seventies, you opened the



gallery, somewhat backing into it, and I got the impression from the way you were talking about it before that you were not just in touch with people in New York but you, early on, were trying to go back and forth.

Hunter: A lot. My friends were here. I went to a college with no sororities or whatever. I haven't been to a high school reunion or a college reunion. My college was really working at Richard Feigen Gallery and living in New York.

Q: Yes. So how often were you coming back and did you get a place here that early?

Hunter: No, not that early. I was here four or five times a year and spending the summers out on Long Island with the same group, and various comings and goings from the seventies into the eighties, and watching that all morph. Younger people will always say, "Oh, I wish it were like that now. I wish I could have been there," or "It sounds like more fun." But it also really didn't feel like a scene or anything because the only thing one could aspire to be was probably a rock-and-roller, if you wanted to be famous or get rich. No one really had any aspirations because what you were doing didn't have that possibility or at least it didn't seem to. As much as I found [Patti Smith's] *Just Kids* [2010] a fantasy, having known more about it than that—she is a poet, okay?

[Laughter]

Q: It's a poetic memoir.

Hunter: But she does mention that. Maybe you wanted to be famous. Maybe you wanted to be ambitious. Maybe you wanted to leave Pittsburgh or Long Island and get—but the promise of any kind of financial success connected with what you were doing, you weren't self-consciously making a plan. It wasn't possible. Someone like Robert Mapplethorpe was always ambitious, but it was hard for him to figure that out. And there wasn't a place for him for a long, long time.

Q: He was ambitious about the art—

Hunter: Right.

Q: Not necessarily about making money, whatever that—

Hunter: Well, he always did want to make money but it just wasn't—and even the kind of unprecedented success that people like Jasper seemed to have and Bob had amazing success and Andy did too, but one didn't necessarily think one was going to be able to replicate that or expect to replicate that. Also one couldn't imitate that. You just couldn't. You couldn't do the same thing and people had different concerns. Those were the heroes.

Q: How were you thinking about the financial aspect or the commercializing aspect of running a gallery? You're drawing on this network of your friends but you're also selling artifacts and if you're trying to stay afloat, you're trying to make a profit on some level. How did you—and dealing with people who, as you were saying before about the gallery in SoHo, whose interests,

whose commitment to the network, whose commitment to the very idea of art might be very different. It might be simply a speculative—

Hunter: Less so then.

Q: —exercise for them. [Laughs]

Hunter: Less so then.

Q: Less so?

Hunter: Put that out of your mind. It was more the graciousness of—

Q: It was?

Hunter: —the wealthy or whatever. It was part of life.

Q: But was that a conflict?

Hunter: The enrichment of life.

Q: Was that a conflict for you to figure out the money part of it?

Hunter: No because at the time, again, to my mind those things meshed rather than separated out.

Q: Which things?

Hunter: Society and art—they wanted to hang out together, wealth and art liked hanging out together. It was the sixties. It was a time of breaking down, to my mind, versus— Now that changed in the eighties.

Q: Why?

Hunter: I'd have to think about that for a long time.

Q: Or changed in what way? How would you describe the change?

Hunter: I suppose some people would say there'd been a lot more art schools and career advice for artists themselves, but the nation changed to the conservative. It was Ronald [Wilson] Reagan, thank you very much. Andy adapted beautifully. Artists' business, artists' commerce—it was okay again to be politically incorrect. There was a hardening that I find—that I feel is oppression right now and again I would place it right then and there.

Q: But it didn't really feel like that when you were starting out in the early seventies?

Hunter: No, but that's because I was young and probably oblivious. But things didn't seem to have many barriers and certainly I was able to sell art and people weren't going to fuss at me whether their auction prices were any good or whether they would be able to cash— Will they make a good investment? The most you could say back in those days was, "Buy a lot of art and if one of them pays for everything you bought, that's great." But they were patrons with a different feel.

Q: Yes. Can I read you a quote from yourself? I was reading through some of—

Hunter: Oh god. What did I say then?

Q: —your letters to Rauschenberg.

Hunter: What did I say then?

Q: Not that long ago. But there's one that strikes me as relevant. It's from January 2002 and you're writing to Bob Rauschenberg. You wrote: "Making art that affects individuals and that can join them together still seems important. I have the sly idea that art often brings money to rest in a good way. Yes, commerce is there, but if it goes to the artist, it goes to more art that puts money to rest again and really, in the scheme of things, the secondary market is not so much after all. My perception is, again, that the revenue often goes back to art after all." I just thought it was very interesting. It's a very interesting thing to say to Rauschenberg but a very interesting

thing for a gallery owner to say. It seems related to what we're talking about and I wanted to ask you to comment on that phrase, bringing money to rest.

[Laughter]

Hunter: Well, it's not the case right now.

[Laughter]

Hunter: Gee, 2002, ancient times.

Q: Ancient times.

Hunter: Well, again, to go back to the sixties, we went through various little currents of different attitudes. I had one artist call me up and tell me I couldn't sell his art to a certain person because their money was dirty. This was something I was confronted with very early on and of course my reaction was, whose money isn't dirty?

[Laughter]

Hunter: If you really go into it, if someone is extremely wealthy, usually it means they took advantage of some situation or had some luck but almost always it's—again I'm not a finance person. As far as trying to run a gallery, I had no clue how much it was going to take. We were

taking giant risks and I can tell you, if you've never been an entrepreneur of your own business, my recommendation is don't.

[Laughter]

Hunter: Because it's just like anything you start out that you want to make it work and you're the investor and the entrepreneur, how are you going to survive all of the cycles? Because even back then, even if Houston didn't run exactly on the same financial cycles as say New York City and we did have three huge downturns where our gallery teetered, and only through the kindness of friends and strangers and people who'd give you a loan. Before the first savings and loans crisis, which happened in Texas, we had friendly bankers who believed in people they knew doing things. Then after that we didn't have any more Texas bankers and the second banking crisis was worse, in '89 I think. It would be great to have a wonderful business plan at a certain point. I do connect it more with the eighties; there was a different kind of celebrity associated with artists, even different from Johns and Bob. Something happened. It could be easily because everyone got a little more sophisticated about PR [public relations]. Mr. [Charles] Saatchi certainly had something to do with it as he became a player in the art market. Something really clicked, shifted, switched. That's my perception.

Q: That's not just a New York story but that was felt in the regional markets as well.

Hunter: And internationally. Consequently then, there was a more orchestrated approach and there was the potential to make more money. Of course, auction houses before '72 or '73 did not

deal in contemporary or living artists. They slowly in the late seventies, Christie's, Martha Baer, started putting in the contemporary. No one thought it would work and the auctions sold really only to the trade. It was an entirely different situation. I would buy at auction, even then, thirty percent below, forty percent retail, and that's the way it went. Now the numbers were miniscule, but you could go in and buy Ed Ruschas or there was a downturn in Andy Warhol, you could buy one for a couple of thousand dollars and the next year it was suddenly worth thirty-five thousand dollars. But you didn't really anticipate that. It was to the trade. It was pickers. We were pickers. We knew who was in the room. Now, it's on a very steroided up—

[Laughter]

Hunter: —market manipulation, whatever you want to say. I always think of the Hunts [Nelson Bunker Hunt and William Herbert Hunt] trying to corner the silver market to control the market. But also of course, with the art, it will change in a flash and you can't predict it.

Q: Right. Well, let me take you back to the Rauschenberg thread. You were describing the show that David Whitney curated with the *Venetians* and you connect in the seventies. You're going back and forth between Houston and New York.

Hunter: Right, but I'm not dealing with Bob or—

Q: You're not on the radar.



Hunter: No. Brice Marden I knew quite well and he had been working for Bob and I knew Dorothea [Rockburne], who'd been working for Bob, and because Mayo had his—and I knew David White. We'd known each other quite a long time. But art world friendships, because you're all in the same reference system and moving along, it's not necessarily being with someone every day, but you have a common language and you have common experiences.

Q: Fellow travelers.

Hunter: Yes and that's always been very important to me and continues to be. You're always glad that Bob's over there doing the work or whatever is happening and you're going to see the shows. I ended up at some point in the eighties working with Sonnabend [Gallery, New York] and selling some Rauschenbergs to a client because I thought they were wonderful, just before their big break-up. But my next connection to Bob actually comes—and this is a date that I'm unsure about. I tried to look at it. It could be as early as '78, but I really think it's '79 or most likely '80. But I was invited by Anne Livet and Klaus Kertess to join the Trisha Brown Dance Company board and Bob was our president.

Q: A-ha. I was assuming—that was another quote I was going to read you, if you don't mind me reading yourself.

[Laughter]

Hunter: Listen, I'm amazed at whomever that person is who's talking.

[Laughter]

Q: This is you in 2000.

Hunter: Yes, well, that's a different person.

Q: It's to Bob, talking about epiphanies in another way, but let me just read you one paragraph.

“Every time we gather at the meeting table for the Chinati Foundation, I base everything I can bring there on the example you set years ago at Trisha's meetings; originality, encouragement, reinforcement, as well as a well-chosen silence, without a preconceived agenda other than to bring out the best in art and the best cooperation among people. Even if I can't emulate your style, it is inspiration.” I read that and thought, Trisha—that's got to be Trisha Brown. I have to ask her. [Laughs]

Hunter: But that was the next event really that made the connection and—

Q: Do you remember who else was on that board? Who else was working with her? Bob was the president, you said.

Hunter: Bob was president, often accompanied by Terry Van Brunt at the time. Anne Livet, Klaus Kertess, Nancy Graves? I'm trying to see who was sitting around the table in the first iteration. Not Nancy. Oh, the woman whose husband was the head of Lincoln Center [New

York]. [Note: Klaus Kertess, Anne Livet, Dorothy Lichtenstein, Molly Davies, Sylvia Mazzola, Ruth Cumming Sorenson, Nancy Graves were the other members of the Trisha Brown Dance Company board.]

Q: In that period?

Hunter: Yes, of the Lincoln Center group or whatever—John [W.] and Sylvia [Drulie] Mazzola. Anyway, Sylvia Mazzola was on it, Anne Livet, Klaus Kertess. I don't know if—because Dorothy [Lichtenstein] is on it and I don't know whether she was on it then. She might have been and I don't know whether Ruth Cummings Sorensen was on it then. Molly Davies. I can't remember the whole crew.

Q: Was this the first board you had been on or had you been on boards previously?

Hunter: I had been on a film committee for the state of Texas and maybe on a chamber group in Houston. This was Anne Livet, because we had known each other when she was at Fort Worth as a curator and had done a book on contemporary dance, and Klaus, because he was just totally involved with Trisha and so supportive. Both of them were encouraging us to come to the performances in New York when we were here, come for the gala or come for the celebration; not galas because there really weren't galas. I went to a performance of *Glacial Decoy* [1979]. I had met Klaus while still a student when I visited him at his gallery at 15 West Fifty-seventh Street, the former Green Gallery space, and then when we both spent summers in the early seventies in East Hampton, Wainscott.

Q: *Glacial Decoy*, I think, is '79.

Hunter: At Finch or at Loyola—

Q: Finch?

Hunter: Marymount [Manhattan College Theater, New York]. They had a theater. I swear. It was uptown on the East Side. We went to the performance and for everyone who gave a hundred-dollar donation, you got a little Rauschenberg signed photograph. Not many people signed up for it. I did. So that's when Klaus and Anne said, "Oh, you bought a photo. You can be on the board." [Note: *Glacial Decoy*, Marymount Manhattan College Theater, June 20–24, 1979]

[Laughter]

Hunter: It was basically like that.

[Laughter]

Q: What a prize!

Hunter: That's how I ended up at Chinati too.

Q: Really?

Hunter: They found my name on a letter and they said, “Oh, you can be on the board.”

[Laughter]

Hunter: I already knew Don and he had had shows with us. I knew Don, right? I had been to Chinati for every Open House and all that sort of stuff because it was such an unusual thing to be happening in Texas. How could you ignore it? But they found my name on a letter and they called me up and said, “Will you come on the board?” I went to the first board meeting and [Rudolf Herman] Rudi Fuchs, the director of the Stedelijk Museum [Amsterdam], turned to me and said, “You Texan. You be president.”

[Laughter]

Hunter: You can see we had good governance.

Q: What year was Chinati?

Hunter: Don died in '94? So it was '95. I was the president for seven-and-a-half years at that transition time, thank you very much. Anyway, so I was at these Trisha Brown Dance Company [TBDC] board meetings and I was diligent about actually attending them and helped fundraise a lot. We had an amazing dinner party in the chapel at 381 at one point later on that was just

fantastic. I brought Robert Mapplethorpe. He was in not very good shape and people really didn't want to talk or to be close to him. It was a shame. But we had a really good time and Bob was very warm and loving towards Robert.

Q: So in terms of a personal relationship, it's through the board that you're starting to get to know Bob.

Hunter: Right and he was a marvelous president. He was just marvelous because he really, really only cared about the art. Of course he gave her tremendous generous grants; five hundred thousand dollars at times, whatever, when need be. But he really cared that she handle her work properly, recognize it, document it. He really cared and he always had great advice that was always about the work itself. Then when they needed money, he would often give them money. Now they also fought like cats and dogs at various times on their collaborations.

Q: Well, I was imagining that it seems complicated to be the president of the board but also to be a close friend and collaborator.

Hunter: But that was the way things were. That's a very late sixties, seventies—

Q: That's the way people did it?

Hunter: Yes, because who else was going to support you? They weren't being supported. This goes across the board, whether it be Trisha or Philip Glass or whomever. They weren't being

supported by any other structure than their friends, who were also in the art world. Even Merce [Cunningham] had trouble, hard times. He had a stronger will about all that in certain ways, and he and Bob also had—Bob adored Cage but seemed to have a rougher time with Merce and then after John died, I remember Bob saying, “Oh gee, Merce is getting more like John now.”

[Laughter]

Q: There seems to have been a bit of a contrast between Trisha and Bob?

Hunter: But they were on the phone to each other all the time with these collaborations. They were sending postcards back and forth with ideas, very clever, very funny things. But I do remember after one collaboration in particular—I don’t think it was *Set and Reset* [1983], it might have been after *Astral Convertible* [1989]—Bob said, “That lady’s no lady.” I rarely have heard anything quite that harsh.

[Laughter]

Hunter: They had evidently had some very tough times. There was then a hiatus at a certain point before Bob was invited back.

Q: Took a few years off.

Hunter: Right and he did retire as president at a certain point, but he was still Trisha's go-to person, especially in the later years, for funding. He would top up a really big reserve fund or whatever. It was just amazing. Trisha also went to Captiva as Bob's guest and she would use a space there to create dances and rehearse. She would make dances for Bob.

Q: Would you describe yourself as a dance fan or aficionado in that period? I know you knew some of the people. Did your connection to Trisha go back to the late sixties period that you were in New York? Did you know Trisha or Yvonne Rainer or—

Hunter: No.

Q: —people in the dance scene in that period?

Hunter: No, I knew more about the poets who would do—like Vito Acconci or Hannah [Adelle] Weiner [née Finegold] or Scott Burton, when they did that kind of poetry performance kind of thing, or someone like Patti Smith. We were there when she and Gerard [Malanga] were at St. Mark's [Church in-the-Bowery, New York] and did a rock-and-roll poetry standoff, when she brought a guitar or guitarist and shut Gerard down. But I wasn't as aware of the dance world, though Yvonne Rainer was definitely on the radar, [Robert] Bob Whitman, those kinds; Trisha, less for me. I don't think I ever went to a Judson Dance [Theater] performance or anything. But Whitman definitely, Yvonne definitely, and I had to learn about Trisha. [Hunter postscript: Modern dance as practiced by Simone Forti, Rainer, Brown, David Gordon, Robert Dunn, and their contemporaries, including Bob, inhabited a whole different world with different audiences,



mostly drawn from the downtown art, music, poetry scene. The term “dance aficionado” doesn’t really apply in the same way it would have previously. Happenings, soon to be called performance art and installation art, all melded together and though the artists, musicians, and dancers were trained in traditional methods, they were after something else. As stated previously they were not allowed into hallowed halls so they found their own ways and their own places. Robert Mattison’s book on Rauschenberg and performance is called *Breaking Boundaries* (2003).]

Q: About her and her body of work?

Hunter: Right, but I was honored to be asked to be with those people and I would do anything for Klaus Kertess, anything in the world. The fact that someone like Bob was the president was really the icing on the cake.

[Laughter]

Hunter: I’m still on the board to this day.

Q: Oh, you are?

Hunter: They won’t get rid of me.

[Laughter]

Q: Who's the president now?

Hunter: Kirk [A.] Radke. Lawyer. Dorothy is still on too. Dorothy Lichtenstein is the new chair and Jeanne Linnes, new president.

Q: So going back to what you're describing in that letter, just trying to pin you down on it. It's his commitment to the work. It sounds like almost a lack of ego. It's not about him. He's trying to think, "How can I help?"

Hunter: Right, but that's very much part of the downtown sixties, seventies ethic; no money, no support, jobless, a little bit part of that too. He would support them.

Q: It sounds like you're almost responding to or remembering the way he ran the meeting, the way he interacted with people—

Hunter: Oh, unbelievable.

Q: Can you expand?

Hunter: Well, Bob processed a lot of information before he said things a lot of the time. Some of that was probably about dyslexia. He also had a habit of posing sentences and ideas in a poetic

way. But if you think about it, a lot of times they are in reverse. The ideas are kind of— I don't know whether you've noticed that.

Q: Yes.

Hunter: The phrasing goes backwards, which makes it poetic, or the emphasis comes at a different place in the statement. He ran meetings exactly that same way. He would characterize something in an original way that was very obvious actually, whether it be about documenting her work, which he particularly wanted her to do and she never had the money to do, and she never had the determination or support that Merce had, that he did. He was very careful about that. Trisha was less so and it's caused a lot of problems with her archive. I was just up talking about that. [Hunter postscript: Currently the TBDC is making great strides in this area.]

Q: Well, related to the Artpix DVD that we were talking about.

Hunter: Right. But Bob would emphasize that. He wanted to make sure that she could make her work and that that was his point of being there. Bob has, in all of his work, a theatrical component, whatever it is, and he loved the theater. He thought like a set designer in a lot of ways. Almost all of his art has a component that is performative and I hope that the show at Tate [Modern, London] will be knowledgeable about this [note: *Robert Rauschenberg*, opened December 2016]. He adored being able to work with Trisha or the other dancers or the other choreographers. He loved that. I remember watching him at the evening of Rauschenberg collaborations at Lincoln Center [Rose Theater, 2005], whenever that was. He was just so happy.

Q: [Laughs] So there's the level of commitment but there's also a question of style that you're responding to. I like that idea that he's not just committed to her ongoing practice, facilitating her ongoing development as a choreographer, but has that historical sensibility, which is such a huge problem in dance because the medium is inherently ephemeral.

Hunter: Right. He was so aware of that.

Q: It's visionary. You wouldn't necessarily expect a visual artist to think that way because visual artists are making artifacts.

[Hunter postscript: Collaboration as practiced by Bob was a hallmark of the contemporary art world though one can find many historical examples in the twentieth century of visual artists collaborating with dancers and musicians. This question is a presumption of the interviewer. Nothing in Rauschenberg's manner of making art and of other artists at the time indicates they only made artifacts.]

Hunter: Well, but Bob was a visionary. He was different that way. He was a little bit of a savant because you never knew. Where did that come from?

[Laughter]

Hunter: Aren't you from Port Arthur [Texas]?

[Laughter]

Hunter: It's like he got a thread from somewhere, some string somewhere that was very different, that didn't necessarily make him the most sophisticated person in the world. It wasn't like that. There was just this—I don't know, has anybody else used the word—it's a terrible word—guru? He had a little guru aspect to him, a little like Allen Ginsberg, who I met several times. There's a little bit of that kind of, what planet are we on? And isn't it nice you're meeting someone who knows something else?

Q: Yes. No one has used the word guru with me but there definitely is a sense of him as, not quite an impresario, but a convener, someone who magnetizes and tends to almost naturally seem to gather people around him. So the way Rauschenberg had a scene around him, a number of people comment on that, and that he had a kind of personal charisma or magnetism too, and a quality you could call a guru sort of quality.

Hunter: But for me, the guru means not this way. It means kind of that way, like again where's this information coming from? How did you get this information? That's partly about being inventive, imaginative. Later on, sometimes in just a dinner with us and maybe Darryl [R. Pottorf] or somebody. Bob also referred to himself in the third person.

Q: Habitually?

Hunter: No, but every now and then, there's Bob Rauschenberg and there's this Bob—

Q: [Laughs] How did you take that or what tone was that—

Hunter: It was interesting to me because obviously he had to function at a certain point. I think this happens to all people of a certain celebrity or self-consciousness. I have no idea, but it seems to happen. I don't think he took that artificial approach when he was actually making work. I think that he was all him, all there. But at a certain point—and he said things like when he went to the opening of the Whitney Museum of the silkscreens [*Robert Rauschenberg: The Silkscreen Paintings, 1962–64, 1990–91*]. I didn't—maybe I went. I don't think I went to that opening. He said, “Seeing those paintings was like going to a cocktail party with a lot of people you used to know.”

[Laughter]

Hunter: Almost every artist has that moment of disconnect. How did I make that? Why did I make that? What was I thinking? When did I get there? So he was always—he was very aware.

Q: Well, you can see how that self-awareness would result in a kind of disassociation and that distancing that could let you refer to yourself in the third person.

Hunter: Right.

Q: My impression, not having ever met him, is that he had a humor about it and a kind of—

Hunter: Oh yes, it wasn't—

Q: Referring to himself in the third person was part of that. There's that thing, that icon. It wasn't a kind of egotism. Some people refer to themselves—

Hunter: No, it was not offensive in any way that he said it. But he did have a certain distance, I think, even on himself. Again we go back to where did that come from? But he was also incredibly observant, he absorbed a lot of information, processed it. The same is true of Andy Warhol. I admire those kinds of people tremendously, who are just inhaling all that, absorbing it, processing, putting it back together, in whatever way they do.

Q: Yes. Let me, if we can, take another step in the narrative. What I want you to tell me is how we get from that moment, the Trisha Brown board, to you starting to do shows. I think the first one—you were also looking at the dates. The first one I noticed was the mid-eighties.

Hunter: It's '87; November 10 to December 6, *Summer Gluts*.



Installation view, *Summer Gluts*, Texas Gallery, Houston, 1987. Photo: Courtesy Fredericka Hunter

Q: That’s what I have too. How did it go from working on the board together, developing a personal relationship and a friendship, to saying, “Hey, I want to do a show”? I know that the *Gluts* [1986–89/1991–94]—I think that might be part of the story. I want to ask you to narrate that series. The *Gluts* series has a Texas connection and, from what you said earlier, a Trisha Brown connection. No?

Hunter: Well, I think again I would need to check this. I think the first *Gluts* were made in Naples from the Naples junkyard because that set had not arrived for Trisha’s *Lateral Pass* [1985], the set by Nancy Graves. What year was that? [Note: Rauschenberg produced an emergency set for *Lateral Pass* in 1987, Teatro di San Carlo, Naples, Italy; elements of this set were reworked into the *Neapolitan Gluts*. Rauschenberg had already begun the *Gluts* series the year before.]





Rauschenberg's set design for Trisha Brown Dance Company's *Lateral Pass* (1985), Napoli Teatro di San Carlo, Naples, January 1987. Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York. Photo: Luciano Romano

Q: What it says in the chronology, not to question the Foundation, but the Foundation chronology says that in the spring of '86: "Begins *Gluts* series that results from his recent experiences in Texas, where he became aware of how a glut of oil on the market caused a marked negative effect on the state's economy. The first works incorporate gasoline-station signs, license plates, and street signs found in Captiva, Florida." It doesn't mention Trisha.

Hunter: So he started it in Captiva. It was related to the oil glut and I assume when he says he was aware of it in Texas, it's because he was there for the sesquicentennial show [*Robert Rauschenberg, Work from Four Series: A Sesquicentennial Exhibition*, traveled to four venues in Texas, 1985–87], which is probably where we became better friends.

Q: Around that show when he was—

Hunter: Yes.

Q: So that's—

Hunter: '86.

Q: December 21, 1985 to March 16, 1986. [Note: After closing at the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, the exhibition traveled to Marion Koogler McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, 1986; Dallas Museum of Art, 1986–87; Art Museum of South Texas, Corpus Christi, 1987.]

Hunter: Right. I think I made a visit to Captiva with the curators for the sesquicentennial show or something and I ended up there. I don't know when he decided to leave Sonnabend and sort of strike out on his own. I think '89 or something. But I have a feeling he wanted to break some of the bonds. Bob and a number of artists, no matter how famous they get, they do want some feeling of control or independence and not to be beholden to one gallery to run your life. He always liked to have a couple of different representatives and I think it was— We worked directly with him. Anyway we had the show with him with these *Gluts*. No one wanted to really show them and we were thrilled and thought they were fantastic.

[Laughter]

Hunter: But I have to say that general opinion wasn't with us.

Q: I was looking. That's why I brought the catalogue down.

Hunter: It still wasn't until probably Susan Davidson's show at the [Peggy] Guggenheim [Collection] in Venice. [Note: This was the first venue of the exhibition *Robert Rauschenberg: Gluts*, 2009, curated by Davidson and David White.]

[Laughter]

Hunter: I think we sold maybe one.

Q: You did sell one?

Hunter: Yes, at eighty thousand dollars or something.

Q: Do you remember whose idea it was to do the show with you? Did you suggest it to him or did he say after a Trisha Brown board meeting, "I've always wanted to have a gallery in Texas?" How would that have come about?

Hunter: It's a complete blank to me how it really happened. David White might have had a word. Who knows because a lot of time my communications with Bob actually went through David. Also we had a particular patron at the time living in Houston who had been a great supporter of the sesquicentennial show and was very fond of Bob; Susan O'Connor and her husband Roy [O'Connor]. I think her location in Houston and the fact that she was working with us a lot might have had something to do with it too.

Q: Do you remember, in terms of the particular works that you showed, would you have already been aware of the series, of the *Gluts*? Would you have, however the plan, the suggestion came up, gone to Captiva to choose works? How would that have happened?

Hunter: No, I got to choose. I went to choose.

Q: You think you went to Florida or—

Hunter: I'd have to look. I'd have to look. I went to Florida for the *Night Shades* [1991] but I don't remember *Gluts*. It could have been here because things got shipped up here or I could have just looked at photographs. [Note: Ian Glennie, partner in Texas Gallery, confirms that the show was chosen from photographs. He made the selection, one presumes, with the aid of David White.]

Q: Had he shown the *Gluts* anywhere else before he showed them with you?

Hunter: I don't know. That's silly, I don't know. I tend to think not.

Q: I'm not sure. [Note: *Rauschenberg: Gluts*, Leo Castelli, New York, 1986 was the first exhibition of *Gluts*.]

Hunter: Shortly thereafter because he had shown the *Spreads* [1975–83] with Sonnabend, which sort of led to his breakup with Sonnabend. She [Ileana Sonnabend] wasn't supportive of that work. His next affiliation, I think, was with [M.] Knoedler [New York] and I think then it was the *Copperheads* [1985/1989] and *Shiners* [1983/1986–93] and things like that. So we seemed to be in a little weird bubble—

Then he went to Knoedler and we had less—there was a little break there from '87 to '91 and I think that's sort of the Knoedler time. Do you have that on there?

Q: I have your dates. That's right, it's '87 to '91, but I didn't list every gallery he was—

Hunter: Well no, but anyway. At some point he then affiliated with Pace [Gallery, New York] and he put a couple of galleries in as the galleries he would work with independently. He just wanted to make sure he had alternatives even though we are not anywhere near as powerful or as rich as Pace Gallery or what they could do for Bob. He also, I believe, had the idea that he would like to encourage a younger gallery—at the time, we were still younger—a different—I don't know whether Texas made much difference to him because almost every experience he had in Texas ended up being just a disaster.

Q: [Laughs] Well, that was part of what I was wondering, whether that was the logic.

Hunter: I don't know whether it was Texas so much, but I think he had a fondness for galleries that weren't as rich; again a feeling of support.

Q: Well, I'm just looking at the exhibition history. It looks like the first showing before you, about a year before, was Leo Castelli [New York], *Rauschenberg: Gluts*, November 1986.

Hunter: I don't remember if I had seen that show; it is a possibility.

Q: You had seen those?

Hunter: I don't know if I saw that show, now that you bring it up. I could have seen that show.

Q: So that maybe is where the—

Hunter: Right and I wonder if we worked with Leo on the *Gluts*. I don't think so, but I'd have to go back and look. I don't mind. We're the kind of gallery that likes to work with our colleagues. I don't mind if there's a New York gallery involved in things. Maybe we worked with Leo because I did work with Leo on a number of things. [Hunter postscript: All works for *Summer Gluts* at Texas Gallery, 1987, were consigned from the artist's studio.]

Q: Technically how would that work?

Hunter: They consign it to you.

Q: It is consignment. Okay. So it's not the system you were describing before where you buy a series and sell as many as you can.

Hunter: No, no, but at times, it depends on the artist, his stature, her stature. It just depends. Sometimes you buy outright, guarantee, whatever you want to call it. But in many cases it's just consignment and you negotiate the best—if you're giving a whole show, you get a little bit more of a break on the price.

Q: Do you remember how big? Yours is *Summer Gluts*—how big would it have been in terms of—I've seen photos of your space but I'm not sure how big it is in total.

Hunter: Maybe ten pieces.

Q: Yes. At that point were you thinking actively in terms of building a market for Rauschenberg's work among your Houston network, the collectors there?

Hunter: That's a rational way to phrase it, but for us it was the opportunity and the honor to work with someone this important. I also felt, and this has been one of my main concerns, that it was impressive; not avant-garde but innovative work, which is a very important quality for the quality of shows that we like to have, interesting work. It was the great honor of being able to show his work and I believe, in most of my shows, it should be worth it for our clients. It's not necessarily so much establishing a market as it is, for the clients you're close to, who trust you, who become your friends—you want them to get the best advantage they can get. Yes, you'd like

to make a living off this, you're trying to make a living, but you really would like to make sure that they acquire museum-quality art or at least very interesting art that might become museum quality and, contrary to the idea of showing off and paying too much money, the idea that you don't pay too much money; that you actually get a lot of value for what you pay.

Q: A good investment, yes.

Hunter: Though we would never say investment.

Q: You don't use that word?

Hunter: No. It's not.

Q: It's not an investment? Why do you say that?

Hunter: No art is really an investment.

Q: Well, I get the impression some collectors think of it as an investment these days but maybe that's that sea change.

Hunter: We were talking about the change.

Q: That's what you were talking about.



Hunter: It wasn't that—but you were getting all the quality you could get for the money you were spending. I'm attracted to that, that it's not over-priced or not irrational in relationship to career, quality, whatever. I know that it probably sounds so stupid and naïve compared to what happens now.

Q: Well, I don't know. There are a lot of ways to describe what happens now.

Hunter: But investment is something that indeed right off the bat with my two wealthy partners with the prints, they had taken out an ad in the *Wall Street Journal* at that time, in 1971 or '70, that said, "Protect against downside risk." I thought that was horrifying because with art you really can't. But it was using the language of the marketplace and maybe I overreacted even then, not understanding the marketplace. I have always tried to stay away from—

Q: No, I understand.

Hunter: —making that kind of promise because I can't make good on it necessarily.

Q: Right. Well, without trying to narrate the entire range of his gallery representation—

Hunter: Right. Oh my god.

Q: —it was never—there was never a conversation around exclusivity.

Hunter: No.

Q: Part of the rationale was that he wanted connections in a number of different directions at the same time. But can we go through those, I think six? Can we talk about the shows? So *Summer Gluts* is the fall of '87.

Hunter: Right and it's the one—

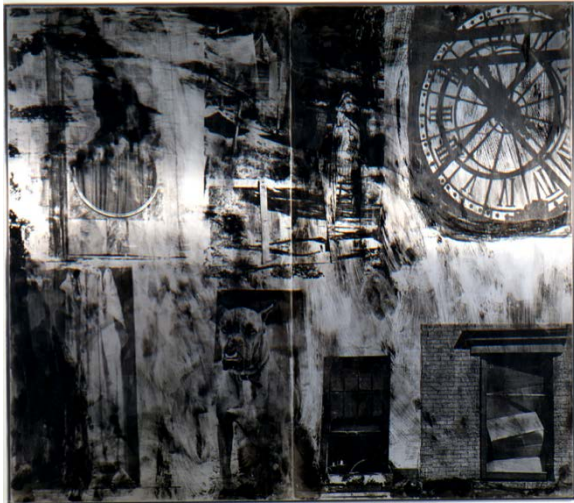
Q: Then it's *Night Shades*.

Hunter: We were so proud of it, yes.

Q: You were so proud of the *Night Shades*?

Hunter: No, of the *Gluts*. We just felt so great having a show of that kind of invention. All of his shows were pretty joyous but this was particularly special. I probably had no awareness at all that there was a kind of resistance to them. Because when you see the whole of his work, how often he goes into more sculptural forms, he takes out images, he takes out color, and it's a spiraling— When you went up to the [Solomon R.] Guggenheim [Museum, New York], you could see it, just like that. In and out, in and out, and this was yet another manifestation of that development of his own thinking about things. Yes, *Night Shades* was our most successful.

[Note: *Robert Rauschenberg: Night Shade Paintings*, Texas Gallery, 1991] We sold a lot of those eventually. We had a dozen of them and I know I went there and picked them.



Robert Rauschenberg  
*Rudy's Time (Night Shade)*, 1991  
Tarnishes on brushed aluminum  
85 x 97 inches (215.9 x 246.4 cm)  
Private collection

Q: You went to—

Hunter: Yes.

Q: Was it here or was that in Florida?

Hunter: In Captiva. He had just finished them and I got a great selection before Pace got their selection. When I left, Bob said, “You picked the good ones,” which was—

Q: Oh really? [Laughs]

Hunter: —sweet of him to say. So that was again another show that we were very, very proud of.

Q: That hiatus—it was just that he was doing other things. It was not a reason for—was that four years?

Hunter: That's a normal—

Q: That's about the rhythm?

Hunter: —rotation that one has, at least in our circumstances in Houston, three years, two years, three years, four years, nothing much. We've gone as many as fifteen and still come back around.

Q: In terms of your roster, I was looking on your website, trying to get a sense of some of the history, who else—I think you mentioned Judd you had represented.

Hunter: That was after—

Q: That was after—

Hunter: —Dia [Art Foundation, New York], when Judd was cast adrift. He came to us and asked to show him.

Q: Well, I was thinking who of the New York artists with a more national or international profile would you have already been showing in that period in the mid-eighties. Who else would you have been connected to by then?

Hunter: Well, some of the artists have been ongoing since the early seventies, like William Wegman.

Q: Wegman was from the beginning?

Hunter: Yes. But in the eighties we had a David Salle show. Cindy Sherman—we had three shows.

Q: So it wasn't that Rauschenberg was some entirely unprecedented step to a new level or to a connection that you hadn't had.

[Hunter postscript: Presumption of the interviewer. Cindy Sherman was not known as she is now. This is in keeping with the gallery showing emerging artists as well as artists of accomplishment, famous and not famous.]

Hunter: Judd was, because he had been exhibiting with first Castelli and then exclusively supported by Dia which took those artists off the market, including Dan [Flavin]. Right after Dia changed its format and basically didn't provide stipends and wherewithal in perpetuity for those artists as had been promised. Both Dan Flavin and Judd came to us. Where that impetus came

from—Don, partly probably because of Chinati, partly because I had done a couple of favors for him before. We were friends from the early seventies barely, but he had been kind and we shared certain friends and who knows, but he picked galleries in different cities and we were all asked to provide him a stipend. We were at a point where we could do that, which wasn't always the case, and we basically bought our show and he made the work. Starting out, it was the *Lascaux* pieces [1989]. Margo Leavin was on the list and I don't know who else, but we replaced his stipend from Dia. He deliberately came to town. He brought Marcia [Simon] Weisman with him. He took me out to dinner and said, "Will you do this?" That was all his doing. Flavin was a bit the same.

Q: He came to you?

Hunter: Now he and Helen Winkler [Fosdick] were very close friends. Helen Winkler was a great friend in Houston and a bit at St. Thomas as well with Mrs. de Menil, only she was working for Mrs. de Menil and was a companion to Philippa de Menil or Fariha de Menil [Sheikha Fariha al-Jerrahi].

[Laughter]

Hunter: Helen had given a big show at Rice University to Dan and we had spent time with Dan back in the seventies when he was in Houston doing that show with Heiner Friedrich. Here was Helen, making her transition from working for Mrs. de Menil to basically working for Heiner and being part co-founder of Dia, and doing all the research on finding the property for *The*

*Lightning Field* [Walter De Maria, 1977]. So I assume that Helen had something to do with Dan coming to us. Again that's all the art world—the thing we can't always see.

Q: That network.

Hunter: Then there were the *Off Kilter Keys* [1993–94], which are more manufactured-looking.

Q: Is that the one in '95? [Note: referring to the Texas Gallery exhibition *Robert Rauschenberg*, 1995, which featured works from the *Off Kilter Keys* series. The artworks are titled *Scores*].



Installation view, *Robert Rauschenberg*, Texas Gallery, Houston, 1995. Works pictured: *Score II (Off Kilter Keys)*, *Score V (Off Kilter Keys)*, *Score III (Off Kilter Keys)* (all 1993). Photo: Courtesy Fredericka Hunter

Hunter: Yes. But they are the ones that have the—

Q: Those are the *Scores*?

Hunter: —angled surfaces.

Q: Is it these—

Hunter: Yes.

Q: —the ones that were *Scores*? Yes.

Hunter: Yes, *Scores*. They had a little bit more of a manufactured look to them. They were very clean.



Robert Rauschenberg  
*Score XVIII (Off Kilter Keys)*, 1993  
Acrylic and enamel on aluminum  
96 3/16 x 111 1/2 x 13 3/4 inches (244.3 x  
283.2 x 34.9 cm)  
Robert Rauschenberg Foundation

Q: Would that have come about in the same way? At a certain point you approach him or you see him somewhere and you say, “It’s time to do another one.”



Hunter: No, every now and then Bob picked up the phone. “Would you show these?” Or “I’d like to do a show.” In ’95, would that have been—when did the Menil [Collection, Houston] open?

Q: I thought that was earlier. [Note: The Menil Collection opened in 1987]

Hunter: They’re twenty-five years old. Were the *Night Shades* at the time in the Menil opening? [Note: the exhibition at the time of the Menil opening was *Summer Gluts*] Just the fact that he wanted to have a show during the time of that opening.

Q: Oh, because it was opening, he wanted to have a show.

Hunter: And because he would be a special guest.

Q: I see, okay.

Hunter: The same was true at the [Cy] Twombly [Gallery, The Menil Collection], at the opening of the Twombly [1995], we had a show of Bob’s work.

Q: That he wanted because of the connection?

Hunter: Yes, right. Because Bob came for the Twombly opening. So one of these was connected to that too.

Bob is the one initiating in most cases and I think *Scenarios* [2002–06] would—when was this show? [Note: *Robert Rauschenberg: Scenarios*, Texas Gallery, 2007] When did this show travel to Houston?

Q: The *Scores*?

Hunter: No, this big show, the big show. What are the dates?

Q: The retrospective?

Hunter: The retrospective.

Q: Isn't that '97?

Hunter: The retrospective?

Q: It's in Houston—February 13 to May 17, '98 [The Menil Collection, Contemporary Arts Museum, and Museum of Fine Arts]. It starts in '97 but it gets to Houston in February of '98.

Hunter: Then that's when—*Anagrams* [1995–97]. That was connected to *Anagrams*. [Note: *Robert Rauschenberg (Anagrams)*, Texas Gallery, Houston, 1998]

Q: Yes, oh, and you're saying that that was his logic.

Hunter: Yes.

Q: That Rauschenberg—yes, it's almost exact, so *Anagrams* opens February 14—

Hunter: Right.

Q: —'98. The retrospective comes to the Menil Collection February 13.

Hunter: Right.

Q: So you've put them to coincide, one day off.

Hunter: Okay and then *Scenarios* was to coincide with the *Cardboards* [1971–72] show at the Menil. [Note: *Robert Rauschenberg: Scenarios*, Texas Gallery, 2007 and *Robert Rauschenberg: Cardboards and Related Pieces*, The Menil Collection, 2007]



Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1991, before traveling to the Menil Collection, 1991–92, and other venues throughout the United States.]

Hunter: Yes. So all of these are about a relationship to the Menil basically in his activity.

Q: So this is *The Early 1950s* show. It goes to a number of places but it's in Houston at the Menil from September 28, 1991 to January 5, 1992, and then goes to Chicago and to New York. The *Night Shades* paintings are at the Texas Gallery, also opening September 28, 1991—

Hunter: That's it. I'm sorry I forgot all that.

Q: —and going to November 2. So that's the—

Hunter: I'm having a show in Houston. I want to sell something.

Q: Yes. That's very savvy. That may have something to do with the success of the show too, that there's energy or there's buzz around the presence.

Hunter: But it also means Bob gets to have two openings and have a great time and do panel discussions, and visit and he always brought his family in. Everybody convened and—

Q: Did you have conversations with the people at the Menil about this [laughs] connection or parallel that you were doing stuff at the same time?

Hunter: No.

Q: There was no coordination on that level.

Hunter: No, no coordination other than we're going to do this, okay? It's fairly informal. Since these were all current works, they were not competitive. But every artist who has to endure, no matter how joyously or happily they do it, looking back at old work, wants everyone to know what they're doing now.

Q: Right.

Hunter: That's true of every artist I know. But wait. Let's talk about what I'm doing now.

Q: They're focused on the now. "This week, I'm in the studio working on X." It's not unrelated to what we were talking about with Trisha Brown, that focus on the now, "What am I working on right this moment?" But also the historical perspective. So we've got these historical exhibits at the Menil Collection and at the same time, "What am I doing this month? What am I doing this year?"

Hunter: Right.

Q: Very interesting. Does that explain all of them?

Hunter: I think so.

Q: The last two I think are *Short Stories* in 2001 and—*Scenarios* is 2007. [Note: *Robert Rauschenberg: Short Stories*, Texas Gallery, 2001 and *Robert Rauschenberg: Scenarios*, Texas Gallery, 2007]



Exhibition poster for *Robert Rauschenberg: Short Stories*, Texas Gallery, Houston, 2001. Courtesy Fredericka Hunter



Exhibition announcement for *Robert Rauschenberg: Scenarios*, Texas Gallery, Houston, 2007. Courtesy Fredericka Hunter

Hunter: Yes.

Q: Wow!

Hunter: I'm sorry that I forgot that too, but that's why.

Q: [Laughs] Well, I'm glad we pulled it out or we drew the parallel out of the chronology.

Hunter: Bob always liked to make those kinds of celebrations.

Q: Yeah, syncretism or synergy.

Hunter: Right and tie-ins. You might find he did it in L.A. quite a bit too. I don't know. Bob also called me once to ask if I would be interested in showing the work of Darryl Pottorf and we politely declined.

Q: Well, that's very interesting. Can I take you in a couple of other directions? Are you okay?

Hunter: Sure. I'm done. I'm running out of steam.

Q: Well, do you want to stop or can I ask you a couple other things?

Hunter: You can ask more questions.

Q: Okay. One was about the retrospective, the '97, coming to Houston. Susan—I read her oral history where she narrates this in some detail and I also talked to her and she told me that you were involved in the controversy with Alfred Kren and the confiscation of artworks and getting him legal representation. She said that you had a role in that.



Hunter: Several of us. I wasn't the only one but—

Q: So I just wanted to ask you to narrate it from your perspective. [Note: Art dealer Alfred Kren instigated the seizure of the works to address unsettled, disputed financial accounts with Rauschenberg.]

Hunter: After the summons was served at the Menil later in the day and artwork was confiscated by the marshals, I recommended a lawyer, Stephen [D. "Steve"] Susman, because he already owned some Rauschenbergs and he is a ferocious litigator and known as the bulldog. He was a close friend and a client of the gallery and he probably is the name that came up for more than one person. But yes, I did help. I got Bob the direct phone number to get started on this. Bob of course did not like litigation very much. He had been ill-advised on this one, but no one ever imagined that anyone would be this devious to exploit influence with a judge and the legal situation in Texas for this to happen. Certainly his lawyer out of New York had no clue that this could ever have these ramifications. Of course Bob ended up settling with this guy. For me, not knowing all the details in an unclear situation about claiming a commission that may or may not have been deserved, it's always hard to know. I've seen it happen elsewhere in the art world and usually everyone just drops it. It's customary to let it usually drop. You might be offended or upset for a while that you were stiffed or something like that but it happens all the time [laughs] on a regular basis. Or you might feel that you deserved to be in on a deal and you didn't get in on it, whatever. We take a lot of disappointments. Bob paid Steve in artwork.

The great thing about Steve Susman, and I will always be very proud of him, is that he and his firm managed to get the laws in Texas changed so that you couldn't confiscate right out of a museum. But the whole incident was a huge disappointment to Bob. There he was with his mom in the wheelchair going around, having a good time. There was a big party that night with Ned Sublette and his Texo-Cuban orchestra playing and—it was a huge blow, only trumped by a million years ago in Fort Worth. When I think back on that, maybe we were up there for that too, for *The Great American Rodeo* show [Forth Worth Art Museum, 1976] and Bob made his *Rodeo* piece [*Rodeo Palace (Spread)*, 1976]. That's, I think, when Anne Livet and maybe Richard Koshalek were there. I think we must have gone to that. But he went out to pee outside the bus and got arrested.



Robert Rauschenberg  
*Rodeo Palace (Spread)*, 1976  
 Solvent transfer, pencil, and ink on fabric and cardboard, with wood doors, fabric, metal, rope, and pillow, mounted on foam core and redwood  
 144 x 192 x 5 1/2 inches (365.8 x 487.7 x 14 cm)  
 Collection of Lyn and Norman Lear, Los Angeles

Q: [Laughs] For public urination?

Hunter: For public lewdness or whatever. Texas was hard on him. Whether or not it was true, I'll never know, and I don't know how many times you've heard the story, but this idea that he'd

gone off to the Navy and then come back to Port Arthur and they weren't there. Was that true, that the family had moved and he insists he didn't know? [Laughs]

So Texas is—

[Laughter]

Q: Texas is tough on the Texas boy.

[Laughter]

Q: Can I ask you one other thing? Are you okay?

Hunter: Yes.

Q: We've been dancing around it but it's a slightly different angle or perspective on some of the things we've been talking about. This, it seemed to me, is part of your interaction with him, something like a commitment or politics that you share with Rauschenberg. I wanted to ask you to talk a little bit about philanthropy, so not just working to support Trisha Brown's company but to think in a more "doing societal good" way about art philanthropy. That's something Rauschenberg, thinking about setting up a service to help artists who couldn't afford to pay their rent [note: Rauschenberg founded Change, Inc. in 1970]—

Hunter: That was brilliant, brilliant.

Q: Right, he had a longstanding commitment to that and it just seemed to me that there's some parallel on that level.

Hunter: It was one of the most original ideas going at the time. I still have the beautiful poster he made with Ruscha. He and Ruscha did a poster that was split down the middle [*Change Inc. West Poster*, 1978].



Robert Rauschenberg and Ed Ruscha  
*Change Inc. West Poster*, 1978  
Offset lithograph  
35 x 23 inches (88.9 x 58.4 cm)

Q: Would you say that, thinking in terms of philanthropy or the politics of art foundations—and we could take this in the direction of the Rauschenberg Foundation, that would be one way to take the conversation—but I'm thinking more generally and about him, that he was an influence to you in thinking in terms of that kind of commitment. Not a lot of people would have thought

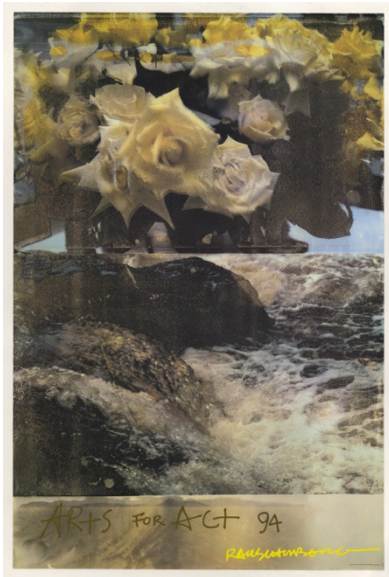
to do something like that when Rauschenberg came up with that idea of, “Wait, people can’t pay their rent. Let me put something together.” Would you count him as an influence on that score? Do you see what I mean? I hope I’m making sense.

Hunter: For me, it seemed really natural. It was more a sense of compassion, from my perspective, coming genuinely from the heart; because I don’t think he practiced philanthropy as so much a conscious, deliberate thing, but he was responsive to things that touched him deeply and he also kind of worried or cared about a larger picture. It wasn’t always so specific. It was more humanitarian in my viewpoint, a humanitarian impulse. He wasn’t necessarily practicing that every day. He wanted to be an artist. So almost all of his philanthropy was a little bit responsive to situations. But he cared about the environment and animals and any of the downtrodden, and his heart would break, I think literally break, over certain situations. While he was alive, since he could make an expression through his art as well as through funding, but it was the art that he wanted to use most, to convey that, I think.

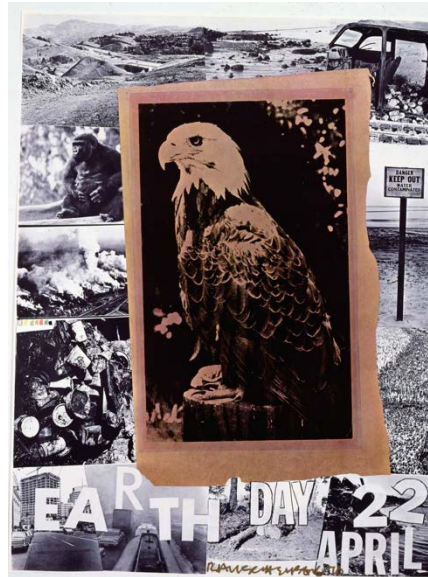
Q: That’s a powerful way to put it. It does seem to be worth underlining because to my mind or my sense of the history it’s quite uncommon to have an artist who has that sensitivity or that humanitarian impulse. There are a lot of artists, even socially conscious, relatively politically committed artists, who don’t think about responding in that way. So it seems worth underlining and I just thought it was a part of him that you had seen close up.

Hunter: But he came, again, from a generation of artists who had to support each other, who had nothing and then expanding that out into the things he cared about, this goes back to the guru

aspect, looking at the bigger picture. No matter how much current or recent art criticism or art interpretation, literary interpretation of his work wants to assign it to his personal biography or his homosexuality or take it within identity politics—and there is a lot of autobiography in his work, there always has been—but it was also what was close at hand. In the early works, he said, “I had this box of stuff.” I always look at his work and what’s in it, again in a more universal rather than ultra-specific—I always look at it as a bigger picture. Consequently what’s represented often, if you study the images, is for me a more universal representation of existence. You have animal, mineral, vegetable kind of ideas. We’ve got to have these things in here because this is what the world is made of. I always think of him as having a bigger view, including for the philanthropy. It could be the women’s shelter in Captiva [Abuse and Counseling Treatment (ACT), Fort Myers, Florida] or it could be the Earth Day poster or it could be a tragedy somewhere. But it mostly came through the use of the art because while he was alive—while they’re alive artists can be very, very generous with their art because they can make more and they know they can make more. He also of course wrote his little manifestos, which were quite unusual I think. I don’t know how many artists write from that kind of viewpoint, that of his little manifestos.



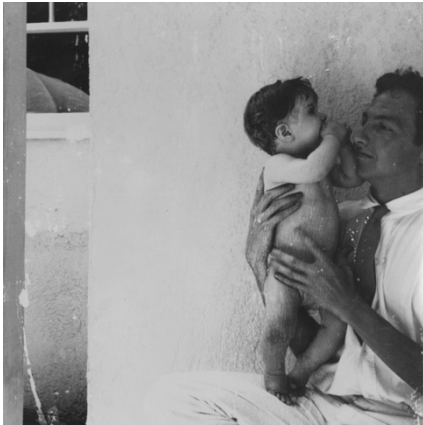
Robert Rauschenberg  
Untitled [Arts for ACT poster], 1994  
Offset lithograph  
38 x 25 1/4 inches (96.5 x 64.1 cm)



Robert Rauschenberg  
*Earth Day April 22* poster, 1970  
Offset lithographs  
33 3/4 x 25 1/4 inches (85.7 x 64.1 cm)

Q: Not too many, it's true. Would you say that part of the mission of the Foundation after his death has to be to—although he's not still around to continue making more work but it has to be to continue that commitment with that responsiveness?

Hunter: I think several of us on the board have different perspectives about how the Foundation, which is in relative terms very young, really young—his son carries on a tremendous—you see and hear a lot of Bob in [Christopher] Chris [Rauschenberg], and I'm so pleased that he is the president. I'm so pleased he's involved. I'm so pleased he is really a touchstone for the whole thing. It's really important and he's a glorious person.



Rauschenberg photographed by Susan Weil with their son, Christopher, 1952. Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York. Photo: Susan Weil



Christopher and Robert Rauschenberg, Captiva, Florida, ca. 2005. Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York

But coming from an art history point of view and Bob, I do feel strongly that caring for the art, documenting the art, doing all the legacy work has to be accomplished at the highest level.

That's the first thing because that's what Bob cared about the most. I also believe there should be a continuation of the tradition of philanthropy and myself, I'd like to see it distributed between artists and social issues equally because these were important things to him. I'm hoping that at some point this will become the kind of Foundation that can do a tremendous amount of good. I feel there have been some very astute activities in this way already.

From my participation on the board, what I have to care about the most right now is his specific artwork. Everything has to be done just right and cared for and worked out and figured out. Then of course you do hope, just like with Warhol, that it all ends up manifesting itself in a way that the public can see quite a bit of it and know more about him. Because Bob doesn't do well online—and he knew that—or in reproduction. His is more complicated. It doesn't read like



Andy Warhol does online. You have to see it in person and when people get near it, they get charged up. It happens still yet, now. So consequently the Foundation really has to steward this work and get it to the right places and hopefully also develop the Foundation for a tremendous amount of philanthropy eventually. That's where it should be. That's the use of the work.

Q: I understand that. There are other things I could have talked to you about but I feel like that was a stopping point, unless there are areas that I haven't covered that—

Hunter: Oh, I'll think of a million later. I do want to tell you one funny story. At a certain point, there was distance between Cy Twombly and Bob even though they often spent holidays together, even late at Captiva. Cy Twombly was an easygoing kind of guy, but he and Bob were definitely of different orientations to the world in general and to painting and to art. So when the Twombly pavilion [Gallery] opened, at the [Texas] Gallery we had the show for Bob as well and Bob came and was generous to be there for his friend and that was a big gesture, marvelous; not too often would another artist go see another artist get his own museum or whatever. But he did come and one night we had a smaller dinner party after all the other things were over, with Cy and Bob and a few friends. I think Christophe de Menil was there. It was a formal dinner and a little stiff at a nice lady's house. But at the end of the dinner there was tea and after-drinks in the music room and there was a big piano. Bob sat down to play the piano.

Q: Did he play the piano? [Laughs]

Hunter: No.

[Laughter]

Hunter: He did not play the piano. Then Cy sat down next to him and the two of them played the piano and I don't think either one of them played the piano.

[Laughter]

Hunter: I think there are some photos of them sitting there together. It was so touching for most everybody and really lovely and lighthearted and of course Bob played the piano one certain way and Cy played it another sort of way and it was a fantastic evening.

Q: Wow.

Hunter: Now Bob did the music for two of Trisha's dances [note: *If you couldn't see me* (1994) and *You can see us* (1995)]. There are posters for some of TBDC performances.

Q: Not performing the piano on stage though.

Hunter: Exactly!

[Laughter]

Q: Wow.

Hunter: But that idea.

Q: That's a really nice moment.

[Laughter]

Q: I wish there was a video.

Hunter: [Laughs] But even at the end when Bob would be in his wheelchair and he'd be onstage, whether it was at the Met [Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York] or whether it was in Lafayette [Louisiana] or whether it was at the Menil, even then the things that would come out of his mouth after a certain amount of contemplation were just amazing. Again we're back to that turn of phrase, the way he reversed everything. You see it in the work, the fact that he was silkscreening all kinds of reversals. You always wondered. He was seeing things in more dimensions simultaneously than a lot of us and it extended to most of the world [laughs] I think around him.

Q: I get that impression.

Hunter: Anyway—

Q: Well thank you. That's a great anecdote to end with. Thank you so much for taking the time and taking so much time. We got pretty close.

Hunter: We got there. I can't believe it. That's what Susan said to me. "Oh yes, you'll find out you know more than you thought or can talk more than you thought." She had already been coaching me.

Q: Well, you do and we opened up or solved a very interesting—in terms of the chronology, that piece of it, the parallels. I hadn't noticed that, even though I was noting down all the chronology. But I'm glad we brought that out—that logic. That's very interesting.

Hunter: Well, we kind of backed into it.

Q: Well, we backed into it but that's—

Hunter: But that's without saying rationally, "Well, you know what really happened here?"

Q: But we got to it. That's the important thing.

Hunter: I appreciate that you had done—it's hilarious to hear words written back to one—one's own words, it's hilarious. You keep thinking, huh?

Q: [Laughs] Well, it's that distance thing you were talking about.

[Laughter]

Q: “Who is that person and what was she thinking?”

Hunter: But Bob always prompted the idea of—for some reason Bob, you wanted to write a letter to.

Q: I can imagine that.

Hunter: At least I did. I liked talking to Bob.

Q: Yes, I could get that from the letters and they’re wonderful. It’s a wonderful range of references in the tone but also the range of reference; Japanese art, [Federico] García Lorca on *duende*. You had a long two-page quote [laughs] from García Lorca’s lecture on the *duende*. It’s actually a wonderful little collection of letters.

Hunter: I’m obsessed with national characteristics.

Q: National characteristics?

Hunter: Like *duende* or in Brazil—it’s *saudade*.

Q: *Saudade*.

Hunter: *Saudade* and then like Orhan Pamuk talks about nostalgia in Istanbul. They're almost all about a kind of nostalgia, but I'm fascinated by the fact that you could characterize a nation or a people with a word—my continuing thought is that Bob could have related to those kinds of words as a characteristic state of mind that he could relate to.

Q: Yes, that you can locate them nationally and there are all these words that are very difficult to translate that don't quite carry over.

Hunter: One of Bob's favorite poets was Octavio Paz.

Q: Oh, I didn't know that.

Hunter: He had [Debra] Deb Taylor [née Skorupa] and someone else read one of them, line by line, alternating lines at some event.

Q: I didn't know that.

Hunter: But, he loved Paz.

Q: I wonder where that came from.

Hunter: I don't know whether he met him.

Q: It's possible.

Hunter: Because Paz was here and he was in India.

Q: It's definitely possible they could have crossed paths. But I hadn't thought of Rauschenberg as so focused on reading, partly for the reasons we were talking about—dyslexia—but that he just wasn't a compulsive reader. He wasn't sitting, falling to sleep—

Hunter: But somehow or another Paz is—I believe that's a literary connection. Then of course there was the book he never finished with [Alain] Robbe-Grillet. [Note: Rauschenberg completed in collaboration with Robbe-Grillet the portfolio *Traces suspects en surface*, 1972–78.]

Q: That Bob was doing? Was he doing something with—

Hunter: It's a bunch of collages.

Q: I don't think I've seen that.

Hunter: Oh gosh, it's a book that my partner is always wanting to get for his collection and we've never been able to get a copy and it may not have ever been finished but the collages exist.

Q: I don't think I've seen it.

Hunter: I need to ask David about that.

Q: All right, Thank you very much again.

Hunter: You're very welcome.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

#### ADDENDUM

October 6–7, 2016

The following text was provided by Fredericka Hunter to serve as an addendum to her interview:

I realize that our conversation never touched on some of the more social occasions with Bob.

And Bob was very social in the most positive of ways. He was so kind to younger artists who

wanted to meet him and be close to their hero. He was also inclusive. There was hardly an

opening or an occasion where his troop of friends were not in attendance. He always made sure

that Bradley (J. Jeffries) arranged for all of us to be invited. So one would almost be sure to see

Chris (Rauschenberg) and Janet (Stein), Janet (Begneaud), Dorothy (Lichtenstein), Sid (Felsen)



and Joni (Weyl), Julie (Martin), Deb (Taylor), Trisha (Brown) and Burt (Barr), Mimi (Thompson) and Jim (Rosenquist), the Grinsteins (Stanley and Elyse) and (Richard) Dickie (Landry). Most of everyone from 381 and Captiva would be there too. Sometimes the whole of the Trisha Brown Dance Company was included and Dickie would play for the openings. I remember seeing most of them at Guggenheim Bilbao, Guggenheim New York, ROCI (Mexico City, Havana, and D.C.), Porto, and upon occasions in Corpus Christi, Houston, Lafayette, Port Arthur, Fort Worth, San Antonio, and many times in NYC. Being close enough I even drove over to be with Bob and his sister in Lafayette for his mother's funeral. The minister during the service pronounced the name as Rooooschenberg. I always wondered if that was perhaps how it was pronounced in the community or just that the man did not know the family at all.

One of the NYC occasions was Bob's birthday at Trisha Brown's loft and studio on Broadway. David Byrne played acoustic flamenco guitar in celebration. Bob gave out little photo transfer drawings to everyone because he said on one's own birthday one shouldn't get presents but give them. I have two—a pair of swans with the date 1992, which I think was the date of the party at Trisha's, and then one of cows but the date is not legible.



Robert Rauschenberg  
 Untitled [birthday drawing gift], 1992  
 Solvent transfer on paper  
 6 3/8 x 7 1/4 inches (16.2 x 18.4 cm)  
 Unique print from an edition of 150  
 Collection of Fredericka Hunter



Robert Rauschenberg  
 Untitled, 1992  
 Solvent transfer on paper  
 8 x 6 1/2 inches (20.3 x 16.5 cm)  
 Collection of Fredericka Hunter

Another occasion that was of more art historical importance was the day I was invited by David to join Bob and Darryl for a Japanese lunch somewhere in the mid-fifties. Bob talked about his maquette for the Padre Pio Pilgrimage Church commissioned by the Vatican. He talked about how he was not interested in the Last Judgement or the Apocalypse, which I think had been suggested as the proper subject. Instead he said he would do the New Jerusalem . . . though he also seemed to call it the “Blue Jerusalem.” It was to be a curtain wall that could be opened or closed to be incorporated into the architectural design by Renzo Piano. As I came to understand later, this proposal was rejected due to the fact that a rooster and a satellite dish stood in for St. Peter and for God. (That piece, titled *The Happy Apocalypse* [1999], is now in the permanent collection of the Menil. To be clear, several artists were invited and most proposals were rejected, not just Bob’s.) After lunch David said that Bob had been invited by Kirk Varnedoe to come to the MoMA to look at Bob’s work in their collection that had been gathered in one room,

and would I like to come along. It was a fairly profound moment as Kirk asked Bob questions about the works, but the real point was that Kirk had *Factum I* and *Factum II* (both 1957) together next to each other. Kirk asked about the variations such as different color paint in a certain section of each, which were supposed to be the same since the paintings were supposed to be the same. Bob said labels on the cans of paint that he used had fallen off so he didn't know what colors he would be using. I have to say that was one of the special moments of all . . . for me, and all the more so since it was in the same institution where I had my own epiphany about Bob's work back in 1966. The maquette is dated 1999 so the meeting at the MoMA must have been prior to that. [Note: Referring to the small exhibition *Robert Rauschenberg: Early Combines*, opened July 1, 1999, celebrating MoMA's recent acquisition of four works by Rauschenberg including *Factum II*. The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles lent *Factum I*.]

As a young dealer and escaped art historian and before I knew Bob, I and my partner, Ian Glennie, made a special week-long trip to San Francisco in 1977 so we could visit every day the retrospective that had originated at the National Collection of Fine Arts, Smithsonian, organized by Walter Hopps. (The director at SFMOMA was Henry Hopkins, who had previously been the director at the Fort Worth Art Center.) Just as with the later one at the Guggenheim, one was astounded by Bob's inventive use of materials, photographs, paint, and even what would now be called "concepts," but was to us intelligent art thinking. One was also astounded that there was the ebb and flow of images and materials . . . complex and simple. That show ended with the *Jammers* (1975–76), which were to us just astonishingly brilliant and gorgeous. While the show in San Francisco moved from one classically proportioned room to another and the *Jammers*

were jammed into a very small room . . . at the Guggenheim as one progressed up the ramp, the work unfolded similarly . . . a sense of piling up and then erasing or wiping the slate clean again. Both shows were great statements as to the flow of the whole of the work which has an organic sweep to it and that is uncommon.

And then there were the gatherings around the kitchen table at 381 with [Hisachika] Sachika [Takahashi] in attendance. He always liked to give us what he called a Japanese burger which was a ball of cooked rice around a sour dried plum. Sometimes Ileana would be there or Joachim Pissarro or Deb Taylor. Rocky the turtle was there. I remember a luncheon at the Meyerhoffs' [Robert E. and Jane B. Meyerhoff] horse farm and private collection quarters after the National Gallery opening for ROCI and Sachika went off and played havoc with the kitchen staff. Because of Bob the Meyerhoffs were important supporters of Trisha Brown's company. (In the small and strange art world department, Sachika at one time worked for Simone Swan. At that time I was working for Richard L. Feigen in NYC. Sachika wanted to work for a gallery too. Simone then arranged for Sachika and me to go to a private screening of *Monterey Pop* [1968] at Rizzoli so perhaps I could help him or, in typical Simone think, that perhaps we could swap jobs!! So Sachika, speaking little English, and I went to the movie together though no job swap happened. Our next meeting was at Bob's!!!)

And then there were the Christmas presents. I received frozen mangos and several catastrophic hot sauces in signed paint tubes or tabasco bottles and key limes with a key lime pie recipe. Jim Rosenquist has a very funny little monologue about not receiving his Christmas present during the credits of the PBS *American Masters* film, "Robert Rauschenberg: Inventive Genius"

(1999). And on my fortieth birthday I received a folding hand fan all decorated by Bob and signed by him sending good wishes.



Robert Rauschenberg  
Untitled, 1986  
Double-sided solvent transfer on paper and  
rattan fan  
13 1/2 x 24 x 1 1/2 inches (34.3 x 61 x 3.8 cm)  
Collection of Fredericka Hunter

I sent Bob a silver palm as a contribution to the replanting of Captiva after the bigger hurricane—I also frequently sent tamales from Houston—he liked the old-fashioned kind that were skinny, tightly rolled—not so much meat. The kind we all used to get in Texas.

I also remember sometime in 1976 there was a group of us including Brice, Klaus, and Lynda at the Arirang Korean restaurant in NYC—with the deadly ginseng cocktail—and at the next bigger table was Bob celebrating his cover of *Time* magazine (November 29, 1976). Bob Petersen got up to give a toast to Bob and toppled over backwards. As I remember, none of us seemed alarmed at either table.