

REMEMBERING RAUSCHENBERG
THE ARTIST'S PRINTS

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In 1960 Robert Rauschenberg (1925–2008) famously remarked that “the second half of the twentieth century was no time to start writing on rocks.” He was referring to stone-based lithography, a printmaking medium that had recently been revived at workshops in New York and Los Angeles. Nevertheless, two years later he was convinced to make prints at Universal Limited Art Editions (ULAE) in West Islip, Long Island. It was the beginning of the artist’s work in a medium that would span his entire career, and would include collaborations with fine-art presses and paper-makers around the globe, from New York to California and Florida, as well as France and India. The exhibition includes many of Rauschenberg’s artistically and technically innovative explorations in printmaking such as *Breakthrough II* (1965), a lithograph printed on a broken stone, and *Booster* (1967), which, at six feet high, is an x-ray self-portrait of the artist’s body. Also included are selections of Rauschenberg’s work at Gemini G.E.L. in Los Angeles from the late 1960s through the 1970s, when his legendary creative energy and collaborative skills resulted in prints such as *Cardbirds* (1971), a three-dimensional re-creation of cut-up cardboard boxes, and *Preview* (1974), which is printed on silk chiffon and silk taffeta fabric.

In its tribute exhibition to the artist in 2008, Gemini G.E.L. described Rauschenberg’s forty-year collaboration with the press as an expression of his unique commitment to printmaking. Whether standing with the Gemini printers on Melrose Avenue in Los Angeles or making art alongside indigenous workers in Ambert, Ahmedabad, or Jingxian, Rauschenberg worked with boundless energy, an offbeat sense of humor, and an open, loving spirit. With his death on May 12, 2008, the art world, and indeed the world of fine-art printmaking, lost one of its most creative and prolific talents.

Unless otherwise noted, all prints illustrated are from the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Anderson Graphic Arts Collection, gift of the Harry W. and Mary Margaret Anderson Charitable Foundation.



Veils 1 and Veils 2, 1974
Color lithographs
22 1/2 x 30 1/2 in.
Printed by Bill Goldston and James V. Smith
Published by Universal Limited Art Editions
(ULAE), West Islip, New York
1996.74.408-409

Veils Series and Tanya

From 1962 to 1975, Rauschenberg created more than fifty print editions at ULAE, the print workshop in West Islip, New York, founded and directed by Tatyana Grosman. The artist and Grosman became great friends, and she often served as his artistic muse. According to curator Esther Sparks, Grosman responded to Rauschenberg's antic ways with maternal instinct, and he loved her for her fanatical sense of quality. In two of his print projects from 1974, *Veils* and *Tanya*, she became his subject.

The four *Veils* prints were created during one of Rauschenberg's famous around-the-clock working sessions, at a time when the artist was experimenting with a photomechanical camera in ULAE's print workshop. The *Veils* project, which was begun one afternoon in 1974, attempted to reveal how, through the manipulations of light, a three-dimensional object can appear flat. Grosman, who often busied herself at the press while Rauschenberg worked, left her scarf behind in the print shop as the afternoon session progressed to late evening. Rauschenberg decided to use the delicate fabric as part of the project, and he began dropping the scarf onto film that lay directly on top of a photosensitized lithographic stone. Each time, the film was exposed at various settings, and then developed. Rauschenberg continued to drop the scarf and expose the film until about 8:30 the next morning when the developing chemicals ran out. In the end, four of the images were printed as lithographs in the set titled *Veils*, each one a delicate image of fabric that appears luminous yet transparent. The quality of translucency in *Veils* would lead Rauschenberg to experiment with printing on fabric later that year.



Tanya, 1974
Color lithograph
22 1/2 x 15 1/2 in.
Printed by Bill Goldston and John A. Lund
Published by Universal Limited Art Editions
(ULAE), West Islip, New York
1996.74.412

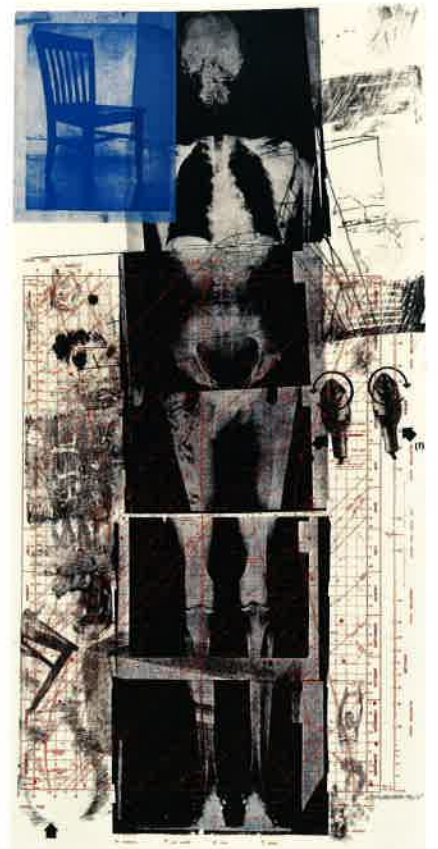
Booster

In 1967, Rauschenberg began his first print project with Gemini G.E.L., a fledgling press that had been founded a year before by Kenneth Tyler with the purpose of introducing innovative lithographic production to cutting-edge artists of the day.

Rauschenberg's concept for his first lithograph at Gemini was to produce the largest print ever produced on a hand-operated lithographic press—a life-size portrait of his 5-foot-10-inch skeleton. For that, x-rays were taken of Rauschenberg's body in six one-foot segments, from head to toe, including the artist's hobnail boots. In a complex process involving halftone negatives, the composite x-ray was transferred to photolithography plates and put on two separate lithographic stones (the white line separating the upper and lower torso is the division of the two stones).

Rauschenberg superimposed on the skeleton an astronomer's chart for 1967 that tracked the course of stars and planets that year. He also added magazine images of athletes, two power drills, a launching pad, and at the upper left corner in blue, the chair used in another Rauschenberg project, the interactive panel installation *Soundings* (1965-1968).

The publication of *Booster* redefined the possibilities of scale and size in contemporary prints and marked a major achievement for Gemini G.E.L., establishing its reputation as the workshop that stretched the limits of traditional printmaking. Rauschenberg would create even larger lithographs at Gemini in his *Stoned Moon* series two years later.



Booster, 1967
Color lithograph and screenprint
72 x 36 in.
Printed by Kenneth E. Tyler, assisted by Robert Bigelow
Published by Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles
1996.74.401



Preview, from the Hoarfrost Editions, 1974
 Photo-offset, newsprint, screenprint transfers,
 and collage on silk chiffon and silk taffeta
 69 x 80 1/2 in. (overall, irregular)
 Printed by Robert Knisel and Charles Ritt
 Published by Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles
 1996.74.413

Preview, from the Hoarfrost Editions

While he was working on the lithographic stones at ULAE, Rauschenberg noticed that the cheesecloth used with solvent to clean the stones retained some of the newsprint images from the transfer-printing process. He decided to experiment with the concept in his Captiva Island, Florida, studio, and there made a large group of unique fabric paintings out of a variety of materials onto which image transfers and objects such as paper sacks and pieces of cardboard were added. The "paintings" were designed to be pinned on the wall, where they would waft delicately in a slight breeze; their translucency was reminiscent of a light frost, or "hoarfrost," and gave Rauschenberg the idea for the title. The project was such a success that Rauschenberg decided to replicate it in an editioned series at Gemini G.E.L. in Los Angeles, a print workshop he knew would be open to such an experimental idea. Work was begun there in 1974.

Rauschenberg personally selected fabrics and printed matter for the project from Los Angeles sources. Approximately one hundred copies of the Sunday *Los Angeles Times* were organized into piles, joining a group of magazine images that had been enlarged to poster size and reprinted in offset to serve as Rauschenberg's "working palette." He arranged the sheets of newspaper, crumpled or flat, and the offset images on the bed of the lithography press. Under pressure and with the use of solvents, the ink from the images was transferred to the various fabrics lying on top of the newspaper-offset "collage" composition.

Preview, with its large, iconic images of classic cars and a kouros sculpture, is one of the most dramatic of the nine *Hoarfrost Editions* published by Gemini. It has paper bags affixed to the bottom of the central, vertical panel of chiffon, creating a kind of "high/low" material effect that echoes the "high art"/"low art" image juxtaposition of the classical sculpture and the antique automobiles.

Stoned Moon Series

Long fascinated by the U.S. government's space program, Rauschenberg was thrilled to be invited by NASA to be an observer of the *Apollo 11* launch in July 1969. (This was the historic flight that accomplished the landing of men on the moon on July 20, 1969.) He was commissioned by Gemini G.E.L. to do a series of prints based on his observations at Cape Kennedy in Florida and, utilizing hundreds of photographs supplied by NASA, made a series of thirty-three lithographs entitled *Stoned Moon*.

Sack depicts a complex arrangement of images including a booster rocket, the astronauts, the mission control center, the surrounding landscape, and numerous crayon and tusche wash additions.

The production of the thirty-three *Stoned Moon* prints was accomplished during a hectic two months at Gemini. The shop was often in operation fourteen to sixteen hours a day as up to eight printers worked in collaboration with the artist. Activity was so intense that the lithographic stones sometimes broke. In the case of *Sack*, printed in two colors, one stone cracked during proofing but the edition was printed in spite of the condition of the stone. The fissure widened progressively during the printing of the edition, causing embossing of the paper in some impressions.

Sack, from the series Stoned Moon, 1969
 Color lithograph
 40 1/4 x 28 in.
 Printed by Daniel Freeman, assisted by Ronald Adams,
 Stewart Henderson, and Andrew Vlady
 Published by Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles
 Gift of Mrs. Philip N. Lilienthal and
 Mrs. Edgar Sinton, Hillsborough, California, 1970
 A062856





Cardbirds

An October 1971 exhibition of new works by Rauschenberg at Castelli Gallery in New York featured works exclusively made of cardboard. Quite literally they were cardboard boxes that had been flattened, folded, torn, and reassembled by the artist, complete with staples, tape, dents, punctures, dirt, and stains. They were nailed to the wall and called "Cardboards."

The artist explained in the catalogue for the exhibition that he had been exhausted by his previous art projects on the difficult subjects of world problems and national atrocities and longed to work in a simpler vein, utilizing a material "of waste and softness" such as ubiquitous cardboard boxes.

Emboldened by the generally positive critical response to the *Cardboards*, Rauschenberg decided to carry the box idea further, creating exact replicas of the *Cardboards* in printed editions, and he selected Gemini G.E.L. for the project. At the Los Angeles workshop, real cardboard boxes were photographed, transferred to offset, printed, and laminated onto another piece of cardboard. Shipping tape, labels, dirt, and oil stains were carefully printed. Rauschenberg then added real elements such as rubber stamps and bills of lading, to complete the trompe l'oeil effect. There were eight different compositions, each printed in editions of twenty-five to seventy-five. Probably because of the birdlike appearance of some of the pieces, they are called "Cardbirds." The lithographed sections in the museum's impressions of the *Cardbirds* have faded over time, subverting the trompe l'oeil effect.

Cardbird II, from the *Cardbird Series*, 1971
Cardboard, tape, steel staples, photo-offset lithograph, and screenprint
54 x 33 1/2 x 7 1/2 in. (overall, irregular)
Printed by Jeff Wasserman and Richard Ewen
Published by Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles
1996.74.403

Link and Little Joe

Rauschenberg had learned from Tatyana Grosman at ULAE the importance of using fine papers in printmaking. In 1973, he decided to "begin at the beginning" and make paper itself into an art form. Gemini G.E.L. arranged for him to work at the Moulin à Papier Richard de Bas in Ambert, France, a legendary manufacturer of high-quality paper.

Working with the staff at the paper mill, Rauschenberg designed the paper molds by making skeletons of the shapes he wanted the paper to take. He then worked with vats of paper pulp to which he added brilliant dyes. Rauschenberg gently pressed pre-silkscreened images (made by the printers at Gemini from magazine images he had selected before leaving for France) into the wet pulp, so that the images and the colorful pulp fused, giving the series its name, *Fuses*. Rauschenberg's trip to the Loire Valley to make paper inspired him to continue to travel to different countries to make art with local artisans.

In 1975, he traveled to a paper mill in India, this time with a group of Gemini G.E.L. printers, to make paper as art. For the project *Bones*, mill workers constructed bamboo frames in shapes specified by Rauschenberg. Pieces of fabric selected from a local calico mill were placed on top of the bamboo, which was in turn placed into specially built wooden molds. Wet paper pulp was poured on top and pressed down, effectively collaging the bamboo and fabric together. Rauschenberg noted that the finished artwork resembled kites, with the "bones" of the bamboo structure and the fabric colors barely visible in the textured white paper.



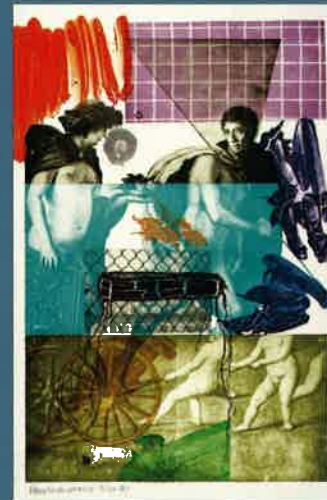
Little Joe, from the series *Bones*, 1975
Handmade paper, bamboo, and fabric
27 x 27 3/8 in. (object)
Produced by Rosamund Felsen, Robert Petersen,
Christopher Rauschenberg, Charles Ritt, and Hisashika Takahashi
Published by Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Wilsey
1994.125.7



Link, from the series *Fuses*, 1973-1974
Handmade paper, pigment,
screenprint, tissue, and paper pulp
25 x 20 in.
Printed by Jeff Wasserman, Gary Reams,
Richard Ewen, and Marie Porter
Published by Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles
Collection of Harry W. and
Mary Margaret Anderson

The *Bellini* Series

Images collected by Rauschenberg on his world travels were used in series of photogravures produced at ULAE in 1986. The artist had spent a great deal of time at ULAE in the early 1980s working on technical details associated with the use of photography in his work. He was particularly interested in making the change from half-tone processes to photogravure because it could produce a continuous tone of rich, full color when printed as aquatint. The result of this experimentation was the complex five-print series *Bellini* (two of the four prints on view in the exhibition are reproduced here). The series is named for figurative elements taken from small paintings in the Accademia, Venice, by the artist Giovanni Bellini (active 1459-1516). In composing each print, Rauschenberg enlarged the Bellini images and placed them within a montage of his own photographs of everyday urban life. Overlays of jewel-like colors and Rauschenberg's painted brushstrokes, complete with the surface crackle replicated from the Bellini paintings, bring the prints to life.



Bellini #5, 1986

Color intaglio

59 x 38 1/4 in.

Printed by Shelly Beech, Richard Dawson,
and Hitoshi Kido

Published by Universal Limited Art Editions
(ULAE), West Islip, New York
1996.74.418

Bellini #1, 1986

Color intaglio

58 1/4 x 38 1/4 in.

Printed by Shelly Beech, Richard Dawson,

Additional Works in the Exhibition

"MARK," in the book *Rauschenberg's XXXIV Drawings for Dante's Inferno*, with commentary by Dore Ashton (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1964)

Lithograph on handmade linen rag paper
15 3/4 x 16 5/16 in.

Printed at Universal Limited Art Editions (ULAE), West Islip, New York
Gift of the Reva and David Logan Foundation
2000.200.4.1

Rauschenberg's XXXIV Drawings for Dante's Inferno, with commentary by Dore Ashton (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1964)

Book bound in decorated paper wrappers
18 13/16 x 18 1/2 x 2 7/16 in. (overall, book)
Gift of the Reva and David Logan Foundation
2000.200.4.1-1

Breakthrough II, 1965

Color lithograph
48 3/8 x 34 in.

Printed by Ben Berns
Published by Universal Limited Art Editions (ULAE), West Islip, New York
Museum purchase, Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts
Endowment Fund
1966.80.60

Love-Zone, from the series *Reels B + C*, 1968

Color lithograph on Rives BFK paper
26 15/16 x 22 15/16 in.

Printed by Charles Ritt
Published by Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Sinton
A027505

Untitled, from the series *Features from Currents*, 1970

Screenprint
40 x 40 in.

Printed by Adolph Rischner at Styria Studio, Glendale, California
Copublished by Dayton's Gallery 12, Minneapolis,
and Castelli Graphics, New York
Gift of Edward J. Cory, 1973
A062875

Untitled, from the series *Features from Currents*, 1970

Screenprint
40 x 40 in.

Printed by Adolph Rischner at Styria Studio, Glendale, California
Copublished by Dayton's Gallery 12, Minneapolis,
and Castelli Graphics, New York
Gift of Edward J. Cory, 1973
A062880

Horsefeathers Thirteen: I-IV, 1972

Four color lithographs, screenprint, *pochoir*, collage, and embossing
27 7/8 x 22 3/4 in.

Printed by Robert Knisel, Ronald McPherson, Gary Reams, Kenneth Tyler,
and Jeffrey Wasserman

Published by Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles
1996.74.404-407

Traces suspectes en surface (Suspect Traces on the Surface), by Alain Robbe-Grillet (West Islip, New York: Universal Limited Art Editions, 1978), 1972-1978

Book of 36 color lithographs printed on white wove handmade Twinrocker paper, printed on 31 pages plus a title page and 4 colophon pages; loose folded sheets in a red cloth-covered box lined in gray with red lettering on the front cover

29 x 22 1/4 x 2 15/16 in. (overall, book)

Printed and published by Universal Limited Art Editions (ULAE), West Islip, New York
Gift of the Reva and David Logan Foundation
2000.200.3.1-36

Veils 3, 1974

Color lithograph
22 1/2 x 30 1/2 in.

Printed by Bill Goldston and James V. Smith
Published by Universal Limited Art Editions (ULAE), West Islip, New York
1996.74.410

Veils 4, 1974

Color lithograph
22 1/2 x 30 1/2 in.

Printed by Bill Goldston and James V. Smith
Published by Universal Limited Art Editions (ULAE), West Islip, New York
1996.74.411

Bellini #2, 1986

Color intaglio
58 7/8 x 37 1/4 in.

Printed by Shelly Beech, Richard Dawson, and Hitoshi Kido
Published by Universal Limited Art Editions (ULAE), West Islip, New York
1996.74.415

Bellini #4, 1986

Color intaglio
60 x 38 1/2 in.

Printed by Shelly Beech, Richard Dawson, and Hitoshi Kido
Published by Universal Limited Art Editions (ULAE), West Islip, New York
1996.74.417

Prints on view in the exhibition *Remembering Rauschenberg: The Artist's Prints* are from the permanent collection of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, including the Anderson Graphic Arts Collection and the Reva and David Logan Collection of Illustrated Books. An additional loan is included from the Collection of Harry W. and Mary Margaret Anderson.

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THE ARTIST'S PRINTS

June 6 — October 4, 2009

Harry W. and Mary M. Anderson Gallery
de Young

Cover Image:

Booster, 1967

Color lithograph and screenprint

72 x 36 in.

Printed by Kenneth E. Tyler; assisted by Robert Bigelow

Published by Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles

1996.74.401