

OFFER WATERMAN

17 St George Street, London W1S 1FJ

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Robert Rauschenberg, *Transfer Drawings*  
from the 1950s and 1960s

Friday 2nd December 2016 –  
Friday 13th January 2017



Offer Waterman, in association with Jonathan O'Hara New York, is delighted to announce the forthcoming exhibition *Robert Rauschenberg, Transfer Drawings from the 1950s and 1960s*. The exhibition is the first in the UK devoted to this rarely seen aspect of his work, and coincides with the major retrospective of Rauschenberg at Tate Modern this winter.

Regarded as among the most influential and iconoclastic artists of his day, Rauschenberg's best known work is characterised by a fascination with and appropriation of contemporary media, which can be seen throughout the transfer drawings. Whilst the drawings anticipate his silkscreen paintings of 1962–64, they are also amongst Rauschenberg's most original and playful works and represent a true innovation in the history of drawing technique.

The exhibition is comprised of over thirty drawings, a sizeable percentage of the total number created in these decades. It will include several works on loan from important international collections, and an equal number of exceptional works presented for sale, such as *Headline* (1962), previously part of the collection of Andy Warhol and shown at the Whitney Museum in the year it was made, and *Complete Relaxation*

Robert Rauschenberg  
*Political Folly*, 1968  
Solvent transfer with watercolor  
on paper  
22 ½ x 30 inches (57.2 x 76.2 cm)  
Private collection  
© Robert Rauschenberg Foundation /  
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(1958), from the year Rauschenberg began his 34 drawings for Dante's *Inferno* (collection Museum of Modern Art, NY).

Rauschenberg began experimenting with the medium in 1952, before his landmark *Combines*, and at an increasing pace in the late 1950s. They are the fruit of his fascination with 'the gap between art and life'. These were the artist's first attempts to capture and repurpose mass media imagery, created by taking photographic images from newspapers and magazines and impressing them, in reverse, directly onto paper by hatching and rubbing with a dry pen nib. Whilst the drawings are not narrative in the traditional sense, they succeed in creating an evocative slice of contemporary life, embodying what Brian O'Doherty defined as Rauschenberg's 'vernacular glance.'

Of the humble beginnings of these and other works, Rauschenberg commented,

'The strongest thing about my work, if I may say this, is the fact that I chose to ennoble the ordinary.'

BARBARA ROSE, AN INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG,  
NY, VINTAGE, 1987

The exhibition is especially rich in works from 1968 – many of which were first shown in a transfer drawings exhibition at Galerie Sonnabend, Paris that year. The global, political turmoil of this period was to prove particularly fertile ground for Rauschenberg, as seen in *Political Folly*, which captured the tumultuous protests at the Democratic party convention in Chicago, and was subsequently acquired by Ileana Sonnabend herself.

These drawings are not so much historical documents, however, than the thrilling pulse of a moment conveyed through time, just as fresh and alive as the day they were laid down by the artist. Roberta Smith neatly captures the immediate appeal of these works in a review written for their last major exhibition:

'The immediacy is thrilling: these works seem to come into being before our eyes as we trace and retrace their formation, their instantaneousness. They happen in a flash and never stop happening. It is an aspect of Mr. Rauschenberg's genius that he folded history into the mix, making it part of a tumult that, for better and for worse, we can trace to the present.'

ROBERTA SMITH, 'A RARELY SEEN SIDE OF A RAUSCHENBERG SHIFT,'  
NEW YORK TIMES, MARCH 8, 2007

The exhibition will be complemented by a fully illustrated catalogue with a new essay by art historian Lewis Kachur.

## NOTES TO EDITORS:

Offer Waterman opened his first gallery space in Chelsea, London in 1996. Now based in a five-storey building in the heart of Mayfair, the gallery has developed an international reputation for offering some of the most exceptional 20th Century and Contemporary artworks to come on the market.

Previously the historic William Morris & Co showroom, the new gallery at St George Street provides a reposeful and understated exhibition space across three floors, with a library and research centre on the fourth. The gallery prides itself on its highly experienced, approachable, transparent and knowledgeable team, who are passionate in assisting clients develop remarkable and individual art collections.

Offer Waterman places considerable importance on the production and delivery of historical exhibitions. From *Frank Auerbach, Early Works* in 2012, to the 2015 presentation of *David Hockney, Early Drawings*, the gallery is dedicated to supporting and nurturing its field of expertise. Offer Waterman is a benefactor of museums and arts organisations, and has provided support to many institutional exhibitions.

As the gallery celebrates its twentieth year, it will endeavour to implement a dynamic exhibition programme, assist private and institutional collections in acquiring art of lasting value and continue its representation at the major international art fairs.

## FOR PRESS ENQUIRIES:

Paget PR  
+44 (0)20 7836 2703

Celia Bailey  
celia@pagetpr.com

**PAGET**  
ASSOCIATES