

Phoenix Art Museum

News Release

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Phoenix Art Museum to present rarely-shown prints by iconic twentieth-century artists Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns

Rauschenberg and Johns: *The Blurring of Art and Life* provides new insight into the two artists' mutually influential artistic practices and innovations



Robert Rauschenberg, *Sack (Stoned Moon)*, 1969
Lithograph. From an edition of 60, published by Gemini
G.E.L., Los Angeles. © Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.

PHOENIX (June 20, 2018) – Beginning July 14, Phoenix Art Museum presents an original exhibition of rarely-shown prints, drawn from the Museum's collection, by two giants of twentieth-century art. *Rauschenberg and Johns: The Blurring of Art and Life* showcases more than 20 works on paper, including lithographs, silkscreens, screen prints, and collage, by neo-Dada artists Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns. These works detail a fascinating visual conversation between two of modern art's most influential creators, evident in their comparable use of familiar objects and contemporary images in service of multiple, often uncertain, meanings. On view from July 14 through November 11 in the Museum's Orientation Gallery, *Rauschenberg and Johns: The Blurring of Art and Life* provides fascinating new insight into the innovative, mutually influential practices of the two artists.

"Phoenix Art Museum is delighted to feature prints from our collection in *Rauschenberg and Johns: The Blurring of Art and Life*," said Amada Cruz, the Sybil Harrington Director and CEO of Phoenix Art Museum. "We are fortunate to count this strong set of prints and works on paper in our holdings, and we look forward to sharing a new perspective on these influential artists with our community."

Rauschenberg and Johns met in 1953 in New York City. The two artists created alongside each other and collaborated for years, first as friends and then as romantic partners from 1954 to 1961. Both artists also spent time at the workshop Gemini G.E.L. (Graphic Editions Limited) in Los Angeles, which influenced their mutually collaborative approach to printmaking. As a result, they inevitably grew to create art that bears obvious similarities. Evident in the

prints on display, Rauschenberg and Johns often stacked images upon images to create visually complex compositions that suggest meanings that are fluid, if not wholly undefined.



Robert Rauschenberg, Poster for Dayton's Gallery 12, 1970. Offset lithograph on paper. From an edition of 300, published by Dayton's Gallery 12, produced by Styria Studio, New York, of which a hundred were signed. © Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.

For example, in Rauschenberg's *Poster for Dayton's Gallery 12*, the artist clipped articles from newspapers and collaged them together to create something new, disassembling a physical manifestation of "truth" to offer an alternative, perhaps less certain, reality. Similarly, Johns deconstructs familiar symbols in the creation of *Flag, Committee Against the War in Vietnam* to express the political turmoil of the anti-war movement. True to his series of multicolored and mixed-media flags, the work presents yet another altered image of the American flag, replacing the patriotic red, white, and blue with orange, black, and green, and a white dot in the center. This work reveals Johns' tendency to experiment with color and various media: if the viewer focuses on the white dot for 60 seconds and then looks at a blank white wall, the original color scheme of the American flag will appear.

These ambiguities of meaning exemplify the kind of works visitors can expect to see in the exhibition. In *Rauschenberg and Johns: The Blurring of Art and Life*, there are images of everything from a ruler to a broom to pictures of fans, wind turbines, and the American flag, a clear nod to their predecessor and founder of the Dada art movement, Marcel Duchamp, who elevated everyday objects to the status of art. However, these recognizable images are now placed within coded narratives, often characterized by contradictions and mixed signals that leave their new meaning fluid and open to interpretation.

"Seeing these rich print materials together brings a new dimension to our understanding of the innovations that Rauschenberg and Johns contributed to twentieth-century art and printmaking. They also serve as an example of how a personal relationship between two artists can translate into mutual influence," said Rachel Zebro, the Museum's curatorial associate of modern and contemporary art, who curated the exhibition. "Their works absolutely had an effect on each other, particularly in their experimentation with printmaking and use of familiar objects. Johns and Rauschenberg brought everyday forms and materials into their practice in different ways, but ultimately created works in the space where the lines between art and life are often blurred."

About the Exhibition

Rauschenberg and Johns: The Blurring of Art and Life will be on view from July 14 through December 16 in Orientation Gallery. This exhibition is organized by Phoenix Art Museum. It is made possible through the generosity of donors to the Museum's annual fund. For more details about the exhibition, please visit phxart.org/exhibition/rauschenbergjohns.



Robert Rauschenberg, Passport (from Ten from Leo Castelli), 1967. Color screenprint on three rotating plastic discs. From an edition of 200, published by Leo Castelli Gallery, produced by Tanglewood Press, Inc. © Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.

Admission is free for Museum Members; veterans, active-duty, and retired military; Maricopa Community College students, staff, and faculty (with ID); and youth aged 5 and under. Entrance to the exhibition is included in general admission for the general public. During voluntary-donation, free-access times, the exhibition is offered free to the general public. Free-access times include Wednesdays from 3 – 9 pm, the first Fridays of every month from 6 – 10 pm, and the second weekend of each month (Saturday from 10am – 5pm and Sunday from Noon – 5pm). For a full breakdown of general admission prices and hours, see bit.ly/VisitPhxArt.

To request interviews and high-resolution photography, contact Phoenix Art Museum's Marketing and Communications Office at 602.257.2105 or margaree.bigler@phxart.org.

About Phoenix Art Museum

Phoenix Art Museum has provided access to visual arts and educational programs in Arizona for nearly 60 years and is the largest art museum in the southwestern United States. Critically acclaimed national and international exhibitions are shown alongside the Museum's permanent collection of more than 19,000 works of American, Asian, European, Latin American, modern and contemporary art, and fashion design. The Museum also presents festivals, a comprehensive film program, live performances, and educational programs designed to enlighten, entertain, and stimulate visitors of all ages. Visitors also enjoy vibrant photography exhibitions through the Museum's landmark partnership with the Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona. To learn more about Phoenix Art Museum, visit phxart.org, or call 602.257.1880.

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