



THE RIVER WEEKLY NEWS



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From the Beaches to the River District downtown Fort Myers

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Fort Myers Art:

Pioneer's Visual Art Exhibition At FSW Gallery

by Tom Hall



John Cage, a renowned composer, music theorist, Author and artist, works on his artwork
Photo courtesy www.artswfl.com

Florida SouthWestern State College continues its celebration of the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery's 40th anniversary by presenting John Cage Steps & Other Works from the Mountain Lake Workshop, an exhibition of visual art by the renowned artist-composer that features the world premiere of his recently rediscovered, never previously exhibited and monumentally-scaled masterwork – *New River Rocks & Washes* (2010). The recently opened show will be on display through July 27.

Cage was a renowned composer, music theorist, author and artist revered as a pioneer of indeterminacy in music, electroacoustic music and non-standard use of musical instruments. He was also a leading voice of the post-war avant-garde. Bob Rauschenberg referred to Cage as his "spiritual and philosophical soul-mate."

One of the most influential American composers of the 20th century, Cage is perhaps best known for his 1952 composition 4'33, a piece instructing the performer not to play their instrument during three timed movements over four minutes and 33 seconds. Cage proposed the revolutionary concepts that any sound may constitute music and that there is no such thing as silence.

A close collaborator through the 1950s and '60s while working with the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, Rauschenberg later wrote, "John Cage [and] his work in every medium is a reward to all [and] will be for centuries." The innocence and challenging audacity of his unique attitude, according to Rauschenberg, "created a labyrinth with no exit."

Often applying chance-based operations to his compositional process in an effort to eliminate aesthetic decisions, Cage's forays into visual art practice – perhaps best represented by his experimentation at the Mountain Lake Workshop – employed many of the same techniques. As collaborator, friend and Mountain Lake Workshop founder Ray Kass reflected, "Cage

didn't adhere to accepted aesthetic rules and patterns for the construction of works of art; he deliberately eschewed the idea that art is created solely through personal taste manipulating elements of visual form."

Through the very recent "rediscovery" of John Cage's seminal 8.5 x 28 foot *New River Rocks & Washes*, visitors at Bob Rauschenberg Gallery at FSW will be given the extraordinary opportunity to be the first to publicly view this monumental masterwork – which until now was unidentifiably crated and in storage for nearly three decades.

As Dr. Laura Kuhn, executive director of the John Cage Trust at Bard College, succinctly noted, "One cannot overstate the importance of John Cage and his work, and its impact on 20th century music, art, and culture."

This exhibition is made possible through a partnership with the Longwood Center for Visual Art (LCVA) at Longwood University and presents excerpts from *Rural Avant-Garde: The Mountain Lake Experience*, an exhibition funded in part by the National Endowment for the Arts. FSW and the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery are deeply grateful to LCVA Director Rachel Ivers and Curator of Exhibitions Alex Grabiec; the staff of the Maryland Institute of College of Art/MICA; as well as to Sean Mooney, chief curator at the Rock Foundation, and the Adelaide de Menil & Edmund Carpenter Collection for essential loans and critical assistance with the preparation and installation of these seminal works. They also extend thanks to Gene Caprioglio at CF Peters Co., Laura Kuhn and Ray Kass for their inspiration, participation and permissions granted.

The Bob Rauschenberg Gallery is located on the Lee campus of Florida SouthWestern State College, 8099 College Parkway in Fort Myers. For more information, visit www.rauschenberggallery.com/2019/03/john-cage-steps-other-works-from-the-mountain-lake-workshop.