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From the Beaches to the River District downtown Fort Myers

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Fort Myers Art

Rauschenberg Exhibit Focuses On Student-Teacher Relationship



by Tom Hall

Florida SouthWestern State College has announced its next exhibition inside the Rauschenberg Gallery. Titled *Rauschenberg & Albers: Box vs. Square*, the exhibition will open on Friday, February 26 with a public reception and performances by internationally-acclaimed electro-acoustic violist Martha Mooke and Sonic Combine.

Rauschenberg & Albers: Box vs. Square will be the first in-depth investigation anywhere of the student-teacher relationship between these two great modern masters. Examined for the first time within the

framework of the rigid *Homage to the Square* and *Interaction of Color* series of his most influential Black Mountain College instructor Josef Albers, *Rauschenberg & Albers: Box vs. Square* at the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery is a curated exhibition that reconsiders the playful cardboard box works (his *Cardboards* and *Cardbirds*) of the internationally-acclaimed artist and Lee County resident Bob Rauschenberg.

Robert Rauschenberg famously spoke of Josef Albers as his most important teacher, and (laughingly) acknowledged that Albers surely considered Rauschenberg his poorest student. Of course, much celebrated for his own artistic production, Josef Albers' pioneering research into the interaction of color (while teaching at the Bauhaus, Black Mountain College and later at Yale University) and legacy as an educator are at least as significant as the paintings and prints he created. His teachings and related publications are still at the core of college art curricula and the subject of courses in every serious teaching institution, including Florida SouthWestern State College, where this exhibition will transform the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery into both an exhibition space and a classroom with hands-on workshops and lectures in conjunction with regularly-scheduled "Color Theory" course offerings during the Spring Semester.

Widely-acknowledged as one of the most important artists of the 20th century, Bob Rauschenberg is credited with pioneering the transition from European modernism to American pop art. His influence still looms large around the globe and his major art museum in the world. As an artist who described himself as working in the "Gap



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between Art and Life" and who often found inspiration and component parts for his paintings and "Combines" by walking around his Lower East Side/New York City neighborhood block, Rauschenberg turned to cardboard boxes as a subject matter and raw/source material after unloading his belongings upon arriving permanently to Florida in 1970.

"Trading the detritus of city life for the sunshine and sand of Captiva Island, the first series of works the artist made locally were the result and direct product of the abundant boxes used to transport his life and art from New York to his new beach-side home," observed Bob Rauschenberg Gallery Director Jade Dellinger. "So, it is particularly fitting that these works be exhibited more than four decades later in the Southwest Florida context that inspired their creation."

The Bob Rauschenberg Gallery was founded as The Gallery of Fine Art in 1979 on the Lee County campus of Florida SouthWestern State College (then Edison Community College). On June 4, 2004, the Gallery of Fine Art was renamed the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery to honor and commemorate its long association and friendship with the artist. Over more than three decades until his death, the Gallery worked closely with Rauschenberg to present world premiere exhibitions including multiple installations of the *1/4 Mile Or Two Furlong Piece*. The artist insisted on naming the space the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery (versus the Robert Rauschenberg Gallery) as it was consistent with the intimate, informal relationship he maintained with both the local Southwest Florida community and FSW.

This event is open to the public, free of charge. This project is sponsored in part by the Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, the Florida Council of Arts and Culture and the State of Florida, with additional support from Chico's International.

Gallery hours are from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday and from 11 a.m. through 3 p.m. on Saturdays. The gallery is closed Sundays and holidays, as well as during FSW's spring break from March 7 to 13.

For more information, call 489-9313 or visit www.RauschenbergGallery.com.

Tom Hall is both an amateur artist and aspiring novelist who writes art quest thrillers. He is in the final stages of completing his debut novel titled *Art Detective*. A former tax attorney, he lives in Estero with his fiancé and their four cats.✪