

LOCAL

Art icon Rauschenberg's 100th birthday: Events planned in Fort Myers, New York, the world



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Key Points AI-assisted summary ⓘ

- A year-long global celebration is planned for what would have been artist Robert Rauschenberg's 100th birthday.
 - Rauschenberg, who lived on Captiva Island for 38 years, is considered one of the most influential artists of the 20th century.
 - He became famous for his "combines," which blended painting and sculpture using found objects.
 - Several events, including art exhibits and documentary screenings, are scheduled in Southwest Florida to honor his legacy.
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[Robert Rauschenberg](#) died 17 years ago. But that’s not stopping the world from celebrating what would have been the art icon’s 100th birthday on Wednesday, Oct. 22.

In fact, that celebration is expected to last a full year with events happening all over the world — including several right here in Southwest Florida, where Rauschenberg lived on Captiva Island for 38 years.

If anyone deserves the recognition, it’s Robert Rauschenberg, says Jade Dellinger, director of [Bob Rauschenberg Gallery](#) on the Fort Myers campus of Florida SouthWestern State College.

“We're constantly making the case that Rauschenberg's the most influential and impactful artist of the second half of the 20th century — and that he really is the progenitor of every art movement after Abstract Expressionism...” Dellinger says. “He was always defying categorization, always about collaboration and about interdisciplinary approaches to art.”

Robert Rauschenberg: An important artist with deep SW Florida ties

The influential artist became famous in the 1950s for his “combines,” art pieces that combined sculpture and painting using found objects. His most famous combine, “Monogram,” was made from a taxidermied, long-haired goat wearing a car tire.

“Over the course of his sixty year career, his art embodied a spirit of experimentation with new materials and techniques,” says [new website Rauschenberg 100](#), created for the worldwide birthday celebration by the New York-based [Robert Rauschenberg Foundation](#). “Dubbed an enfant terrible for his assemblages of urban detritus (the Combines of 1954–64), Rauschenberg engaged a radically minimal palette in the years following his 1970 decampment to Captiva Island in the Gulf of Mexico, off the Florida coast.”

Rauschenberg moved to Captiva Island in 1970 and lived there until his death in 2008. He was 82 years old.

At the time, he was considered by many to be the world's greatest living artist. His work often sold for millions of dollars.

“Every contemporary and/or modern art museum that is worth naming owns work by Rauschenberg, around the world,” Dellinger says.

For Rauschenberg, Captiva Island was a source of energy and inspiration.

“It was an escape for him, but a place that he found became the kind of root of his energies...” Dellinger says. “He felt it was a power spot. He would describe it as that — that there was a certain energy that sort of came from that place that was generative, that was really something that was a fountain for him, a source of life and of art making.”

SW Florida and the world celebrate the 'Rauschenberg 100'

The celebration of Rauschenberg’s life and legacy has already started in Southwest Florida.

During the Fort Myers City Council’s Oct. 20 meeting, Mayor Kevin Anderson is scheduled to formally declare Oct. 22 as “Bob Rauschenberg Day.” WGCU Public Media began airing a five-part TV and radio series on the artist starting Oct. 3. And an ongoing art exhibit at Rauschenberg Gallery — where the artist world-premiered many of his works over the years — features Rauschenberg-themed, mass-produced paintings from [Brooklyn artist Steve Keene](#).

Around the world, many other events are happening to mark the occasion, including ongoing art exhibits at New York’s Guggenheim, Houston’s The Menil Collection, the Orlando Museum of Art and Jacksonville’s Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA).

For many of these events, Dellinger has been traveling around Florida and beyond to give lectures about Rauschenberg and his legacy.

A handful of events are scheduled in Southwest Florida, Dellinger says, but he thinks more will be happening over the next year as publicity grows about the Rauschenberg 100.

“I think it'll snowball,” he says.

RAUSCHENBERG EVENTS IN SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

Here's a closer look at Rauschenberg 100 events happening in Southwest Florida:

Steve Keene: 'RAUSCHENBERG 100 – A Centennial Celebration'

Brooklyn artist Steve Keene is renowned for cranking out all his paintings in a matter of weeks, sometimes days — one after the other in assembly-line fashion. This time, he mass-produced 100 paintings to celebrate what would have been Robert Rauschenberg's 100th birthday.

The paintings use plywood and whatever paint Keene had on hand. They're based on photos of Rauschenberg, his artwork and other things Rauschenberg-related.

The gallery will be open until 7 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 22 — later than usual — and serving birthday cupcakes to celebrate Rauschenberg's birthday. It also will be screening PBS and BBC Rauschenberg documentaries in the Rush Auditorium all day long.

The Steve Keene exhibit takes place now through Dec. 6 at Bob Rauschenberg Gallery Annex in the library at Florida SouthWestern State College, 8099 College Parkway S.W., Building J, south Fort Myers. Admission is free.

For more information, call (239) 489-9313 or visit rauschenberggallery.com.

FSW performance of Terry Riley's 'In C'

On Rauschenberg's birthday, the FSW music department plans an outdoor performance of American composer Terry Riley's 1964 work “In C.” The minimalist piece is built from 53 short musical patterns that performers cycle through at their own pace, creating ever-changing layers, according to the event flier.

Anyone can show up and take part in the performance. Just download the music, bring your own music stand and show up at 4 p.m.

The performance starts at 4:33 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 22, between buildings I and J at Florida SouthWestern State College, 8099 College Parkway S.W., Fort Myers.

For more information, visit facebook.com/artsfsw.

Screening of Rauschenberg documentary ‘Taking Venice’ at Alliance for the Arts

The Alliance for the Arts will screen the [2023 documentary “Taking Venice,”](#) which focuses on a scandalous U.S. campaign to make Rauschenberg the winner of influential art exhibition The Venice Biennale in 1964. Bob Rauschenberg Gallery director Jade Dellinger will speak at the event.

The screening begins at 7 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 13, at Alliance for the Arts, 10091 McGregor Blvd. Fort Myers. Free admission.

For more information, call 939-2787 or visit artinlee.org.

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