

South Seas resort buys art icon Rauschenberg's Captiva property

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Captiva Island resort [South Seas](#) has confirmed it's purchased the 22-acre property once owned by [late art icon Robert Rauschenberg](#).

The property spans from beach to bay along Captiva's Laika Lane and Captiva Drive, adjacent to South Seas and Captiva Village. Its 10 buildings include Rauschenberg's first home on Captiva, known as the "Beach House," an art studio and several other houses and cottages.

The property doesn't include Rauschenberg's newer home next door on Laika Lane. That [sold for \\$4.25 million in 2020](#).

Greg Spencer, president of South Seas, said in a March 31 news release that the property offers "a rare and compelling opportunity to acquire prime beachfront directly adjacent to our established resort." That would allow "a seamless opportunity" for the property to be integrated with the overall resort, including its new amenities, condominiums and hotels.

Spencer said the resort plans to pay tribute to Rauschenberg as part of the acquisition. "We look forward to honoring the legacy of this amazing artist through future art-related programming and by incorporating several buildings from the property into our resort."

'A grievous betrayal': Rauschenberg sale follows community effort to preserve the property



After Hurricane Charley in 2004, Bob Hodosky helps survey the damage to Robert Rauschenberg's Captiva Island properties, including this house previously owned by American cartoonist J.N. "Ding Darling" and known as the "Fish House."

After Rauschenberg's death in 2008, his compound was owned by New York's Robert Rauschenberg Foundation. Multiple requests for comment to the foundation have not been returned.

The property's sale — reported in [a March 30 article in The News-Press/Naples Daily News about South Seas' legal challenges](#) — came after community efforts to preserve it failed.

"It is difficult to comprehend the extent to which the foundation has failed the island community that Bob Rauschenberg loved and personally sought to protect from development," the Captiva Civic Association said in a news release. "It is a grievous betrayal by the Rauschenberg Foundation."

South Seas' news release didn't say when the resort purchased the property or how much it paid. Property records show a purchase price of \$45 million.

Specific development plans for the property haven't been finalized, according to the release. "South Seas is exploring options that align with the reimagined resort. South Seas is also looking at ways to honor the legacy of Robert Rauschenberg and his visionary artistry as plans develop for the property."

Real estate researcher Paige Rausch, with Aslan Realty Advisors in Fort Myers, questions whether the outcome is what Rauschenberg would have wanted.

"My memory of his wishes are different than the outcome that is a reality now, and like others, I feel that the motivations of those entrusted with the care of those wishes were not honored," she said.

She described the property as "a literal Mona Lisa of land."

"Spanning from beach to bay, it is a property of such rare value that it defies standard appraisal," she said.

She felt a deep connection to the property.

"As a young girl visiting Ikki Matsumoto's gallery in the 1980s, I used to wonder if Bob and I were kin because my name, Rausch, was just a shortened version of his," she said. "In German, Rausch means intoxicating, a rush of joy, or fun — and Bob Rauschenberg was the living embodiment of that one-in-a-million spirit. While the title has transitioned to the current ownership entities of South Seas, the legacy of the man and this incomparable land remain an indelible part of Captiva's soul."

Robert Rauschenberg: Art icon lived, worked on Captiva Island



Artist Robert Rauschenberg, who died in 2008, is pictured sitting in the kitchen of his Captiva home as he chats with Laurence Getford, left in this News-Press archive photo. Assistant Bradley Jeffries, center, stands nearby.

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

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

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.

Rauschenberg was deeply involved in the Southwest Florida community. He donated art every year to the annual Arts for ACT auction. The art gallery at Florida SouthWestern State College is named after him and is currently [celebrating Rauschenberg's 100th birthday year with an exhibit of rarely seen works from the artist.](#)

Rauschenberg Foundation announced plans to sell Captiva property in August 2025



Robert Rauschenberg's former Captiva home sold for \$4.25 million on Jan 10, 2020. The Robert Rauschenberg Foundation owned the rest of the artist's property. Photographed on Jan. 28, 2020.

The Robert Rauschenberg Foundation [announced last year](#) that it planned to sell the place and end its longtime artists residency program there. That program had been scheduled to end in August 2026, and it's unclear what happens to it now.

Maintaining the property just got too expensive, according to [an Aug. 27 statement posted on the foundation's website](#). The board of director's decision followed a multi-year study.

"In recent years, the Foundation has dedicated significant resources to address increasingly challenging environmental conditions, including recurring storm damage, broader climate risks and rising maintenance costs," the statement said. "A sustainability assessment confirmed that safeguarding the property would require substantial additional investment and site modifications, without ensuring the property's long-term resilience or reducing the likelihood of future costs."



World-famous artist Robert Rauschenberg smiles as he oversees the hanging of his Scenarios exhibit in January 2007 at the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery at Edison College.

South Seas is jointly owned by Timbers Company, Wheelock Street Capital and The Ronto Group, which purchased the resort in 2021, according to the March 31 news release.

Under that new ownership, South Seas reopened in May 2025 with new amenities, including 2.5-acre water park Captiva Landing and renovated marinas, docks and pools. The resort also plans to open a luxury hotel and the residential [Timbers Captiva Club & Residences at South Seas](#).