

THE NEW FRONTIER GOES TO VENICE:
ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG AND THE XXXII VENICE BIENNALE

By

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ABSTRACT

The XXXII Venice Biennale, held in 1964, presented an important moment in the history of American art, for it was the first time that an American painter was awarded the major prize at the prestigious international show. The fact that Robert Rauschenberg captured the most coveted award of the Biennale, the Grand Prize for painting, had major repercussions for the art scene in the United States and the international art community. For the Americans, the prize was "proof" that American art had finally come into its own, that through its struggle for recognition over the European avant-garde, it had finally reached its well-deserved place as leader of the pack. For the Europeans, especially the French, the award represented the "last frontier" of American expansionism--for it seemed that the economic and military dominance of the United States finally had been supplemented by cultural dominance. It seems pertinent to this study to examine the French response in particular, since they had traditionally dominated Biennale prizes. By analyzing the French reviews and responses to the prize, and situating these in a broader political context, I will discuss how the U.S. was perceived as the new cultural leader, despite the vehement objections to the culture of the New Frontier, which seemed to be only Coke bottles, stuffed eagles and carelessly dripped paint.

Given the vehement objections engendered by the Rauschenberg victory, it seems somewhat curious that the United States would choose Rauschenberg as a representative of American culture. In order to discover how the pop imagery in the work was linked to the image of U.S. culture promoted by the U.S. Information Agency (the

government agency responsible for the show), it is necessary to analyze the cultural and intellectual debates of the early 1960s. Rejecting earlier notions that high art should remain separate from mass culture, a prominent group of intellectuals argued for a "new sensibility" in art which would embrace popular culture, thereby elevating it. This positive notion of a single, all-embracing culture corresponds to a more general optimism among many intellectuals; their rallying cry was the "end of ideology," which disdained radical critique in favor of the promise of Kennedy's "progressivism" and the welfare state. These intellectuals argued that while the system was not perfect, any major problems could be averted by simply "fine-tuning" the existing state; in the meantime, the promise of Kennedy's New Frontier required a more affirmative than critical stance. The elements shared between these discourses on culture and society at this time were of seminal importance to the critical understanding of Rauschenberg's work, particularly as it was presented at the Biennale.

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"The splinter in your eye is the best magnifying glass."

T. W. Adorno

INTRODUCTION

On January 21, 1961, poet Robert Frost prophesized that a new administration, under the leadership of John F. Kennedy, would herald

The glory of a next Augustan Age,
A golden age of poetry and power
Of which this noonday's
The beginning hour. 1

The oracle thus revealed, the nation set out for the New Frontier, where culture and power were to be united as one. Frost's words, and indeed his presence at Kennedy's inauguration, were indicative of the importance of culture for the new administration. The staid conservatism of the Eisenhower years gave way to the activist tone set by the youthful Kennedy. His hard-hitting "realpolitik" was tempered with cultural refinement. Despite pressing concerns, despite Castro or Khrushchev, America always had time for the finer things of life: cellist Pablo Casals played the White House and painter Mark Rothko dined there. At long last, America had officially recognized the importance of culture.

But was this union between government and culture to be as golden as Robert Frost predicted? The question was called at the 32nd Venice Biennale, held in 1964. It was there that American art received international recognition when Robert Rauschenberg captured the most coveted award of the exhibition, the Grand Prize for painting. For the first time in Biennale history, an American artist won the major prize--and for the first time, the United States government was directly involved through its sponsorship of the

American exhibition. Rauschenberg's artistic "poetry" was united with official power--but not all welcomed the winning combination. In France, Arts ran an outraged headline in the wake of the award: "In Venice, America Proclaims the End of the School of Paris and Launches Pop Art to Colonize Europe."² Italy's La Voce Repubblicana described Rauschenberg's works as "a conception of the human condition without a way out."³ The France Observateur provided its own graphic depiction of the situation (figure 1):⁴ a stormcloud over Venice failed to dissuade America's pop-culture superhero from stealing away with the prize.

At a time when an image-conscious America was setting out to establish its international leadership in the realm of culture, the European objections to the Rauschenberg prize highlighted a seemingly incongruous policy. Curiously, the United States chose to represent its cultural refinement with works comprised of junk, refuse, and popular imagery. What did the American organizers wish to convey with Rauschenberg's eagles, coke bottles and smeared paint? Why was Rauschenberg preferred over the other major U.S. contender for the prize, Kenneth Noland? Why did Rauschenberg win?

These questions find some of their answers in the cultural debates and historical circumstances specific to Kennedy's New Frontier Administration. The period itself marks a moment of extreme optimism where the promise of liberalism was concentrated in the Kennedy leadership. Intellectuals such as the conservative Daniel Bell and leftist Susan Sontag found themselves in agreement with each other: things had never looked better, the prospects for solving the problems of poverty and racism were good, and the economic boom promised not only financial security but an unprecedented rebirth of

culture as money and leisure time became increasingly available to all sectors of society.

In foreign policy as well, the new administration sought to advance America's claims to world leadership, pursuing ambitious programs strengthening their economic and military superiority in the Third World and Western Europe to meet the "communist threat." This was not the first time American policy had used Cold War arguments to justify expansionist policies,⁵ but the Kennedy administration pushed the divisions between East and West to dangerous limits in order to reinforce the power and strength of the United States. The Cuban missile crisis demonstrated this policy of "brinkmanship," since the United States increased the stakes of the situation by forcing a nuclear confrontation with Krushev, avoiding diplomatic alternatives,⁶ thereby inflicting a humiliating defeat for the USSR.

American supremacy was not always couched in such dangerously belligerent terms, however. Among its allies, the United States pursued a policy which appeared to foster constructive, mutually beneficial programs, such as Kennedy's "Atlantic Partnership," a call issued to the Western European allies to renew their ties in a "Declaration of Interdependence."⁷ This conciliatory gesture was based on the fear that Western Europe was growing increasingly stronger through the economic success of the European Economic Community (EEC) and would therefore assert claims contrary to

American interests, as the New York Times Magazine reported in May of 1962:

...the United States sees a danger in the [European economic] development that must be avoided at all costs. The danger is that a resurgent Europe would be tempted to discount the need for a close partnership with the United States, and would plunge into 'go-it-alone' policies in economic, political and military matters--to the inevitable harm of Europe itself, America and free nations elsewhere. 8

The "inevitable harm" engendered by such an independent policy was the undermining of Europe's united defense policy, NATO--a defense policy which primarily issued from Washington. To offset this possibility, the Americans proposed a two-part plan (tellingly designated "The Grand Design" by sympathetic journalists): first, the potential economic autonomy represented by the EEC was to be linked to American tariff agreements, in the hopes of preventing the implementation of favorable tariffs within the Community which would discriminate against U.S. trade. This economic plan was enhanced by the United States' hope that Great Britain would be admitted to the Common Market for reasons explained by Kennedy's advisor, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.:

London could offset the eccentricities of policy in Paris and Bonn; moreover, Britain, with its world obligations, could keep the EEC from becoming a high-tariff, inward-looking, white man's club. 9

Ostensibly Britain's world obligations to the U.S. would render it a more responsive ally to U.S. interests in the EEC; as Schlesinger

continued, Kennedy's reasons for Britain's inclusion were "political,
not economic."¹⁰ The second part of this plan was a proposed
military package known as the multilateral force (MLF), which would
allow for an international nuclear seaborn force, manned by the NATO
countries. It was designed to provide a sense of participation among
European allies in NATO who had been excluded from the decision-making
process during the Cuban missile crisis, and were increasingly
suspicious that Americans might sacrifice Europe in the event of a
nuclear war in the interest of its own preservation.¹¹ Yet the
proposal did not substantially alter the existing power balance: the
Americans retained exclusive command and control of the nuclear
forces.¹² The "Atlantic Partnership" was thus a grand design, but
one which chiefly benefited the United States by enhancing its
control over Europe.

This was the context in which Rauschenberg emerged as a
cultural envoy for the United States in an international forum. His
primarily figurative imagery was championed for its ambiguity, which
evoked a formal tension and multiplicity of meanings for the viewer;
these were elements which the U.S. Commissioner to Venice, Alan
Solomon, emphasized in the Biennale catalogue. This thesis will
analyze the significance of these qualities in relation to cultural
debates and international tensions which occurred in the early 1960s,
for it is my contention that Rauschenberg's works, as they were
presented by supportive critics such as Solomon, found their
resonances in a changing concept of modernism where critique was
abandoned for a positive, new sensibility. This shift was expressed
in broader ideological terms among intellectuals as the "end of
ideology," a view which proclaimed the victory of liberalism over the

forces of the Left and the Right.

Similar ideological connections have been drawn between liberalism and Abstract Expressionism, and the way in which the avant-garde of the fifties was co-opted to advance the claims of American freedom and democracy with respect to the Cold War.¹³ While the aims of the U.S. government had not changed substantially in this regard by the 1960s, the way in which they were expressed was altered under the Kennedy Administration. In part this was an organizational change in strategy; in the fifties, private institutions such as the Museum of Modern Art created the impression that avant-garde exhibitions were organized freely and independently, while in fact they represented government interests.¹⁴ By the sixties the government cast off this facade of non-interference, a move made possible by the liberal image which Kennedy projected and enhanced by the tone of his administration:

The American people expect more from us than cries of indignation and attack...For the world is changing. The old era is ending. The old ways will not do...Here at home, the changing face of the future is equally revolutionary. The New Deal and the Fair Deal were bold measures for their generations--but this is a new generation...It is time, in short, for a new generation of leadership--new men to cope with new problems and new opportunities. 15

America was embarking on a course where old policies were no longer applicable; society was poised on the brink of change, and solutions had to be systematically sought and implemented. It was a rehetoric

of engagement and challenge, one which gave the New Frontier its name:

...we stand today on the edge of a new frontier-- the frontier of the 1960s, a frontier of unknown opportunities and paths...The new frontier of which I speak is not a set of promises--it is a set of challenges. It sums up not what I intend to offer the American people, but what I intend to ask of them. It would be easier to shrink back from that frontier, to look to the safe mediocrity of the past...But I believe the times demand invention, innovation, imagination and decision. For the harsh facts of the matter are that we stand on this frontier at a turning point in history. 16

With the Kennedy Administration at the forefront of the frontier, there was no shrinking back--America embarked on a policy of brinkmanship which applied to culture as much as to foreign policy.

The avant-garde was thus of integral interest to the administration where innovations and bold measures were highly prized. And, like anything else laboring under the Kennedy challenge, "new men" were needed "to cope with new problems and new opportunities." For a government seeking to stand on the cutting edge of cultural progress, the "old way" of the preceding generation, Abstract Expressionism, were no longer relevant. Alienation and retreat had no place in the New Frontier. A new avant-garde, one of youth, untainted by the problems of the war, one which had matured in the prosperity of the 1950s was enlisted to express the positive values promised in the new society. Whereas liberalism in the 1950s had used the dissent embodied in Abstract Expressionism to demonstrate freedom within democratic society, the

insitutionalization of liberalism--with Kennedy as its prime exemplar--rendered dissent superfluous in an age filled with optimism and promise.

Liberalism was thus given a new look specifically tailored for the 1960s. While it still occupied a central position between the extremes of communism and fascism, the new liberalism under Kennedy proclaimed the end of all ideologies--issues between the Left and Right were neatly dismissed when Kennedy's rise to power seemed to ensure the implementation of liberal values, even cultural progressivism. Under his leadership leftist intellectuals and Cold War liberals were united in their hopes for a new society. These developments were of particular importance to the critical reception of Rauschenberg's work, and form a major part of this thesis.

While these issues were central to Rauschenberg's success in America, they also help to account for the negative response to his work among European critics, particularly the French who felt his award marked the completion of a plan of U.S. domination. I have chosen to focus on the French response, not because it was the most vitriolic (the Italian press also vehemently condemned the Rauschenberg victory) but because France represented the traditional seat of Western culture. The French had desperately clung to their cultural tradition through the onslaught of Abstract Expressionism, and the Biennale was one of the last strongholds where that tradition was continually honored and recognized. The Americans' fought hard to win the Biennale in that year, and the outrage their victory precipitated was indicative of the stakes, which were political as well as cultural.

The United States was challenging French cultural domination at a time when France was contesting American political hegemony in Europe. Kennedy's Grand Design, the consolidation of America's military and economic "partnership" with Europe, was abruptly thwarted by an increasingly recalcitrant ally--France. Convinced that the U.S. had no intention of relinquishing its monopoly on nuclear weaponry, French president Charles de Gaulle announced his intention to develop an independent defense force (ironically, this plan was released on May 15, 1962, less than two weeks after the New York Times Magazine had expressed fears of a "resurgent Europe," discussed above--see page 4). Kennedy responded to de Gaulle's announcement within two days, warning

We cannot and will not take any European ally for granted, and I hope no one in Europe will take us for granted either...Our commitment, let it be remembered, is to a common united defense, in which every member of the Western Community plays a full and responsible role, to the limit of his capability and in reliance on the strength of others... As long as the United States is staking its own national security on the defense of Europe...we will continue to participate in the great decisions affecting war and peace in that area. A coherent policy cannot call for both our military presence and our diplomatic absence. 17

The French announcement challenged American power, and while it posed no immediate threat militarily, it had the effect of ideologically undermining U.S. hegemony in world affairs. France was bluntly reminded that the Americans had no intention of relinquishing its role in the "great decisions" regarding Europe. Yet de Gaulle persisted in his attempts to establish an independent French policy;

persisted in his attempts to establish an independent French policy; in January, 1963, de Gaulle vetoed Britain's bid for membership in the EEC and unequivocally rejected the American MLF plan.¹⁸ By November of that year, he launched his slogan of "l'Europe europeenne", advocating an independent Europe which pursued its own interests, rather than those of the United States.¹⁹ A truculent France had thus initiated a policy which deliberately resisted American attempts to dominate the affairs of Western Europe at a time when the Kennedy administration was intent on asserting American authority more firmly than ever before.

This study attempts to address the reasons for the Americans' victory over the French cultural tradition in 1964 within this historical and cultural context. Rauschenberg's award was a remarkable achievement when we consider that the United States had never been a serious contender for the major painting prize in previous Biennale competitions. The prize signified a major shift in Western culture, one which had begun in the immediate post-war period, but which achieved official recognition by 1964, when the School of Paris was displaced by American Pop Art. Thus, this investigation will not focus on Rauschenberg's personal iconography, but rather seek to understand the ideological and political issues activated by both the works and the circumstances surrounding their exhibition in Venice.

It should be clear from the preceding discussion that this thesis will examine issues of which the 1964 Biennale was only a part. Yet this exhibition marks a moment when the ideological and cultural debates of the period come into sharp focus. For this reason alone, it deserves careful analysis. The Biennale was a major

event in terms of its impact on the art world although no thorough study has yet been made. Lawrence Alloway makes brief mention of the 1964 American exhibition in his book The Venice Biennale 1895-1968, from salon to goldfish bowl.²⁰ He acknowledges the significance of the Rauschenberg prize, but dismisses the controversy it evoked in a single sentence: "The fact that an American won the prize was a shock to some art establishments, but it was well received by many artists and writers."²¹ Critic Pierre Restany's affirmative estimation of Rauschenberg's work is offered as evidence of the favorable reception the prize was accorded. What Alloway neglects to mention is that some of the shocked "art establishments" comprised entire countries and that Restany is hardly an "objective source" since he was a major promoter of Pop Art and New Realism. But perhaps these are quibbling details to Alloway, who also championed Pop Art from its beginnings.

The only text which treats the Biennale in any detail is Calvin Tomkins' Off the Wall: Robert Rauschenberg and the Art of Our Time.²² One chapter is devoted to the 1964 Biennale, but the information is presented as it relates to Rauschenberg's life and career, thus failing to address broader issues relating to the organization of the show, the curatorial decisions involved, and so on. Tomkins does provide a useful chronology of events leading to the Grand Prize, but there is little in the way of analysis. The general tone of the text is anecdotal, and the discussion of the Biennale prize ends with Rauschenberg's personal thoughts about

winning the major award:

[Rauschenberg] thought for a moment, concentrating hard on the question. 'That scene in San Marco yesterday really got to me,' he said. 'Butterflies in the stomach and a lump in the throat--like it really did mean something after all.' 23

A touching moment, perhaps, but one which gives little information about what the prize "really did mean," after all.

In both Alloway's and Tomkins' accounts, major questions are left unanswered and serious analysis of the Biennale is superceded by anecdotes and generalities. Because no scholarly attention has been focused on this show, much of the material presented in this thesis comes from original documents and interviews with people directly involved in the organization of the American exhibition. The files on the Venice Biennale kept by the U.S Information Agency (which was designated by the government to organize the show) document the preparations for the Biennale, revealing curatorial decisions, negotiations for additional exhibition space, budget information, and so forth. I have also relied on various unpublished papers and documents available through the Archives of American Art in Washington, D.C.; these included reviews and press releases of Rauschenberg's work which were retained by Rauschenberg's dealers, Betty Parsons and Leo Castelli. The Alan Solomon papers, also at the Archives, were extremely important since these are the only records of the show left by Solomon, who died in 1970.

Many questions remain without conclusive answers, largely because documentation is simply unavailable. For example, the

reasons for government interest in the Biennale in 1964, and the extent to which it was involved (financially and politically) in the show will remain somewhat ambiguous until State Department documents become available. Similarly, the deliberations of the jury are still unclear, a situation aggravated by the fact that some people seem unwilling to speak of those events. Sam Hunter, the American juror, remains silent despite repeated attempts to initiate discussion with him. However, correspondence from the Swiss judge, Franz Meyer, provided some interesting insights into the discussions amongst jurors.

Alan Solomon's assistant at the Biennale, Alice Denney, was most willing to speak with me about the exhibition; she discussed events with great candor and enthusiasm. Lois Bingham, a USIA official who worked with Solomon throughout the exhibition, also shared her recollections of the organizational problems and curatorial decisions involved.

These sources have made it possible to describe previously undocumented events and clarify those which had been ignored or overlooked in previous accounts of the exhibition. With this material and various secondary sources discussing the political, historical and intellectual issues of the period, I hope to present a study which not only offers a critical analysis of the 1964 Biennale, but contributes to a greater understanding of the cultural policies promoted by the Kennedy administration and the impact of those policies on Europe.

NOTES

1

Robert Frost, quoted in Gary O. Larson, The Reluctant Patron: The United States Government & the Arts, 1943-1965, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), p. 152.

2

Pierre Cabanne, "L'Amérique proclame la fin de l'Ecole de Paris et lance le Pop'Art pour coloniser l'Europe," Arts, June 24, 1964.

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"The Signs of a Cultural Crisis in the Exasperation of Pop-Art," La Voce Repubblicana, July 23-24, 1964, Venice Biennale files, "Translations," USIA (64-045), (Washington, D.C.: National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institute).

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Leonard, "Des dollars chez les Doges," France Observateur, June 25, 1964.

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See for example, David Horowitz, The Free World Colossus: A Critique of American Foreign Policy in the Cold War, (New York: Hill & Wang, 1971) and Gabriel and Joyce Kolko, The Limits of Power: The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1945-54, (New York: Harper and Row, 1972).

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Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., A Thousand Days, (New York: Fawcett Premier, 1965), p. 772.

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13

Most recently, this has been discussed in Serge Guilbaut's How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War, translated by Arthur Goldhammer, (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1983); see also Eva Cockcroft, "Abstract Expressionism: Weapon of the Cold War," Artforum 12 (June 1974), pp. 39-41, and Max Kozloff, "American Painting During the Cold War," Artforum 11 (May 1973), pp. 43-54.

14

Cockcroft, *passim*.

15

Kennedy, quoted in Schlesinger, p. 64.

16

Ibid.

17

Kennedy, in a speech delivered at the Conference on Trade Policy, Washington, D.C., May 17, 1962, in Nevins, p. 105.

18

Brown, pp. 303-4.

19

Philip M. Williams and Martin Harrison, Politics and Society in de Gaulle's Republic, (London: Longman Group, Ltd., 1971), p. 48.

20

Lawrence Alloway, The Venice Biennale 1895-1968, from salon to goldfish bowl, (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1968).

21

Ibid., p. 150.

22

Calvin Tomkins, Off the Wall: Robert Rauschenberg and the Art World of Our Time, (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1980; reprint ed., London: Penguin Books, 1981).

23

Ibid., p. 11.

CHAPTER I

A "Grand Design" for Venice

The Venice Biennale has been continually an occasion for critics to put forward, from their national viewpoints, synoptic think-pieces, surveys of the 'art of our time,' analyses of the 'cultural crisis.' 1

In 1964, the Venice Biennale became the focus of a "cultural crisis" where numerous "synoptic think-pieces" took on a national bias unprecedented in Biennale history. With the American painter Robert Rauschenberg taking the most prestigious award, the Grand Prize for painting, the Biennale provided a forum in which issues of cultural leadership, the state of modern art and cultural hegemony were hotly debated and widely contested. It was clear that by 1964 the Venice Biennale was established as the international show which provided the gauge for modern art--its direction, its center, its leaders. While many critics might have questioned the final selection, there was a basic consensus that the Biennale prize represented an official sanction which bestowed prestige and legitimacy on an artist or art movement, and by implication, established a nation as the cultural leader. It was this general consensus which made the choice of Rauschenberg such a controversial one, for by adding him to the roster of established modern masters, the Biennale was acknowledging the ascendancy of American culture in the international art world for the first time.

The fortunes of the Biennale had changed significantly after

increasingly recognized as the major international show of modern, avant-garde art. In part, this was due to the trend of the Biennale in the late 40s and early 50s, where the majority of prizes were given to established modern artists whose major contributions had been made in the first half of the century. Most of these artists were French (including, for example, Henri Matisse, Georges Braque and Raoul Dufy) with the average age of the artists being about seventy-three years.² This "retrospective" approach to the award of the prize had important repercussions for the Biennale's reputation, as Lawrence Alloway points out:

Modern art became increasingly the product of giants instead of eccentrics; heroes instead of victims. The reappearance of the great names linked modern art and cultural prestige in a way that had not occurred before.³

In essence, the Biennale had established itself as a show which commanded both historical importance as one of the first major international exhibitions (founded in 1895), as well as a show which had an appropriate modernist "pedigree" by honoring established modern masters. This was an essential distinction which elevated the prestige of the Biennale prizes, for artists which followed on the heels of the modern "Old Masters" would likewise have a place in the artistic hall of fame. The Biennales which followed were intended to build on this trend, but with an emphasis on new artists rather than established moderns.⁴ Yet the juries consistently awarded prizes to French artists who, while perhaps less well-known internationally than the likes of Matisse, were nonetheless established artists, and

all well over sixty. Supposedly dedicated to the most current trends in modern art, the Biennale had avoided acknowledging Abstract Expressionism, despite the appearance of several representatives of that movement at Biennales throughout the 1950s.⁵ The show seemed clearly aligned with European modernism, the traditional stage-set for the avant-garde, and little notice was given to American art movements in the post war years.

Despite the oversight of Abstract Expressionism, the Venice Biennale commanded increasing notoriety and publicity in the years following World War II. By 1964, most major art publications reviewed the show and carried articles on events or anticipated shows at the various pavilions before the Biennale actually opened. The New York Times, the Washington Post and other major newspapers followed the show, and even mainstream media magazines such as Newsweek and Time Magazine covered events. On an international scale, the same was true--L'Express, Der Spiegel, and Tokyo's Yomimuri (circulation 3,700,000)⁶ were all carrying extensive features on the 1964 Biennale. In comparison to other biennials such as the one in São Paulo, Brazil, the Venice Biennale was by far the most prestigious on an international scale.⁷ The São Paulo Biennale's lack of international prestige relative to the Venice Biennale was telling of the firmly entrenched notion that culture was still the in the hands of Western Europe and perhaps it was this assumption which made both North American and European audiences look to Venice for confirmation of the latest artistic trends.

The organization of the Biennale was also an important element in terms of the international attention focused on the show. Since the prize was awarded to a specific country via its chosen artistic

representative, much of the controversy engendered by the Rauschenberg prize in 1964 was precipitated by the very structure of the American exhibition. The national basis for the award, along with the prestige it afforded, was an essential component in the struggle at the 1964 Biennale, and one which will be discussed in more detail in chapter three. However, it was not simply the nature of the award, but the way in which it was given which also made the prize an attractive one for nations involved in the competition. The exhibitions were judged by a seven member jury comprised of representatives from various participating countries, with one member serving as the chairperson. The jurors were selected by the president of the Biennale on the basis of nominations submitted by commissioners responsible for the organization of their respective pavilions. Thus, the jury was an international and ostensibly objective body which selected the artistic leaders in painting and sculpture, and, by implication, the "leading" culture based on nationality. In 1964, the jury included an American (Sam Hunter) for the first time--and this, as we shall see, was the source of much of the controversy which followed Rauschenberg's victory in Venice that year.

The factors of tradition, prestige, and the manner of prize selection were important considerations for countries which participated in the Biennale and it was these factors which made the final outcome, the prize, much more important as time went on. Yet it was not until 1964 that the United States government took an overt, active interest in the international show. Prior to that year, the Museum of Modern Art had been responsible for the American

exhibitions at the Biennale and the government had traditionally remained uninvolved. The reasons for the government's sudden interest in the show at this time cannot be completely clarified until State Department documents are made available. However, the Kennedy Administration's interest in the arts precipitated an overall change in official cultural policy, a change which was to have profound implications in Venice in 1964. Contrary to the staid, conservative cultural image of Eisenhower's administration, Kennedy fashioned his New Frontier policies on a youthful, seemingly progressive image out to advance, enrich and promote American culture. Kennedy's liberal stance and his emphasis on development and progress were well-suited to his role as the "people's avant-gardist." With Kennedy, the latest developments in art were incorporated into the official presidential policies. With the opportunity of organizing the American entry to Venice, the government seized an international forum in which it could implement these new cultural "directions." The organizing body responsible for all previous American entries to the Biennale, the Museum of Modern Art, withdrew from its organizing role for financial reasons. In an appeal on behalf of the International Council of the Museum of Modern Art, August Heckscher (formerly John F. Kennedy's Special Advisor on the Arts, 1960-62) contacted both Edward R. Murrow (then Director of the U.S. Information Agency) and Lucius Battle (Assistant Secretary

of State for Cultural Affairs), stating

We all feel the importance of having the United States represented at the biennials, particularly those of Venice and Sao Paulo which are generally regarded as the most famous international art festivals in the Old and New World, respectively. To have this country absent at a time when it is placing fresh emphasis upon the achievements of its cultural life would seem an unfortunate contradiction... 9

Heckscher's comment is indicative of the Kennedy Administration's attempts to bring culture to the forefront, and it was one of the aims of that administration that U.S. culture carried a message that all the world would hear. It was therefore fitting that the agency responsible for the Voice of America and other cultural propaganda projects, the U.S. Information Agency (USIA), was given the task of organizing the show in the hopes that the Venice Biennale would be a suitable transmitter for America's new-found confidence in culture. The Biennale provided the United States with an opportunity to demonstrate that it was a society capable of producing not only material goods, but a high culture as well. Governmental involvement was no longer seen as a hindrance to artistic freedom as it had been in the past; the Kennedy image of progressivism was well suited to the task of sponsoring a major avant-garde exhibition.¹⁰ MoMA's reluctance to organize and finance the show effectively put the government in a position to "save" modern art, thereby reinforcing¹¹ the advanced image projected by the New Frontier.

The immediate task confronting USIA officials was that of selecting an appropriate cultural representative for the new administration's policy. Rather than simply allocating funds to the

Museum of Modern Art, the USIA selected the director of the Jewish Museum, Alan Solomon, to organize the show.¹² According to Lois Bingham (chief of the Fine Arts Section, USIA Exhibition Division) she selected Solomon because she was "looking for a scholar who would stand behind his convictions" and curate "a cohesive show which said something for America."¹³ Solomon's work at the Jewish Museum made him a likely candidate for such a task; he had curated major shows of younger artists such as Rauschenberg, Johns, Noland and Frankenthaler and had written catalogues which firmly supported and attempted to establish new trends in American art.¹⁴ His involvement with the "Neo-Dada" artists Rauschenberg and Johns was especially important, because according to Bingham, the Venice Biennale officials had specifically requested that these artists be included in the U.S. exhibition.¹⁵ This poses some interesting questions: why would the Biennale officials request pop artists and why is there no record of such a request in the USIA files? It is also curious that the USIA should take advice from Venice, thereby abdicating responsibility for the Agency's own selection. Were the Italian officials actually determining the content of a show which was designed to "say something for America"? Whether the USIA chose to concede their own policies to the Italians or to determine their own artistic choices, certain trends became apparent in the exhibition's early stages of organization: younger, relatively unknown artists were the principle focus of the show, and they were to be presented as a cohesive group rather than an eclectic assortment of artists typical of previous shows sponsored by MoMA in which artists such as Ben Shahn, John Marin and Edward Hopper had been included together with Abstract Expressionists. Additionally, the inclusion of Morris Louis and

Kenneth Noland added another dimension to the show--that of abstract painting. The implications of presenting these works in the Biennale will be discussed in more detail later. At present, let us turn our attention to the circumstances surrounding the organization of the show.

Bingham and Solomon traveled to Venice in November 1963 to inspect the U.S. pavilion owned by MoMA. The space was deemed too small for the artists Solomon planned to feature; the U.S. organizers felt that Noland, Louis, Rauschenberg and Johns (the "Four Germinal Painters" as Solomon called them) could not be shown on an appropriate scale in the limited space afforded by the U.S. pavilion. The funding for the show--initially \$34,000 precluded any major renovations to MoMA's pavilion, despite the fact that the USIA budget for the Biennale would almost triple to \$102,977 by the June opening.¹⁶ However, rather than pare down the show either by eliminating artists or the number of works, the USIA sought an agreement with the Biennale officials whereby an annex located off the Giardini grounds could be used to exhibit works. The introduction of an annex was to become a very important part of the response to the U.S. exhibition; the location of the works was the basis of a major part of the controversy over the American prize which will be discussed later. Because of the problems the additional space engendered for the organizers (in terms of the logistics of the exhibition as well as the critical response to it), it is worth examining the negotiations for the annex and the structure of the exhibition itself.

According to Bingham, several possible exhibition spaces were

offered by the Biennale officials, who were reportedly "enthused" about the possibility of a U.S. annex and who provided assurances that any artists featured in the annex would be considered eligible for the Biennale prizes.¹⁷ The Americans readily agreed to expand the show beyond the perimeters of the Giardini, but rejected suggestions from Biennale officials and chose the former U.S. Consulate office that had been vacated six months prior.

Choosing the old consulate building proved a shrewd maneuver on the part of the USIA. Aside from the fact that the building had a history of official diplomatic service, thus providing a somewhat official "aura", it was ideally located for maximum exposure; though relatively removed from the Giardini grounds, it was situated on the Grand Canal. Its more central location, compared to the Giardini which was removed from the center of the city, promised greater accessibility to a public which extended beyond the Biennale audience and was also sure to attract those avant-garde enthusiasts emerging from the nearby Guggenheim "Art of This Century" gallery.¹⁸ The introduction of an annex provided the U.S. with the opportunity to stage a fairly complete and comprehensive show, given the added space, and also allowed for greater exposure, simply because the annex could stay open after dark, unlike the Giardini pavilions which relied on natural light. Indeed, several vernissages were held there prior to the official opening, where guests were able to ease into the world of pop art with assistance from Seagrams, who benevolently supplied the USIA with free booze.

The annex proved to be something of a mixed blessing for the U.S. organizers. Use of the consulate building required lengthy negotiations with the State Department which was reluctant to rent it

to the USIA. Despite the extensive deliberations required to secure the consulate space, and after several outright refusals from the State Department, which wanted to sell the structure, the USIA insisted that as the most suitable exhibition space. Once the arrangements had finally been made between the two bureaucracies, Solomon presented concrete proposal to USIA officials that the consulate exhibition would be expanded to include younger artists following up on the developments made by the "Four Germinal Painters." Yet the artists selected had stylistic affinities with only two members of the "germinal" group, Rauschenberg and Johns. Solomon explained

The situation in abstract painting is so fluid now by contrast with the clearly established group on the other side, that I do not think we could maintain the balance represented by the four germinal figures if we wish to illustrate developments among the younger artists. For this reason I would propose to extend the exhibition with a representation of the major figures of the so-called pop group, including one artist, Frank Stella, who actually stands between the abstract painters and the object painters. 19

Such a statement is revealing for it assumed the firm establishment of pop art, which admittedly was gaining popularity; however, advocates of newer abstract painters would no doubt have argued that "fluidity" of the abstract painting situation was insufficient grounds for dismissal. Nevertheless, Solomon's proposal was accepted and the U.S. exhibition began to focus rather disproportionately on pop art at the expense of abstract painting. Johns and Rauschenberg, benefitting from the additional space in the consulate, exhibited

almost twice the number of works compared to those of Noland and Louis shown in the pavilion.²⁰ Yet it is worth noting that the pop artists were excluded from the Biennale grounds, exhibited only in the consulate annex. In keeping with the USIA's original plan, the canvases of Noland and Louis were slated for the official pavilion in the Giardini, whereas the works of Rauschenberg and Johns, along with the "younger artists" Stella, John Chamberlain, Claes Oldenburg and Jim Dine were to be exhibited in the annex.²¹ The reasons for the split between the abstract painters and pop artists in terms of exhibition space remain unclear. According to Bingham, the pavilion space was simply better suited to the works by Noland and Louis. Alice Denney, Solomon's assistant, claimed that Kenneth Noland insisted upon being shown in the pavilion. Whatever the reasoning, it was clear that by grouping all of the pop artists in one large space, the annex show took on a more cohesive appearance in keeping with Solomon's desire to present pop art as a movement.

With the exhibition preparations underway, the annex again became a problematic issue for the USIA organizers. The Venice Biennale president, Mario Marcazzan, notified the USIA office that Biennale regulations prohibited considering any artists for prizes if their works were not located in the Giardini.²² The statement generated a flurry of telegrams between the USIA and Marcazzan. The Agency's position relied on verbal agreements made between Bingham, Solomon and the Biennale Committee during their first visit in November 1963, while Marcazzan insisted on following the regulations; once the show opened, he denied that the previous verbal agreements had ever transpired. Washington maintained that an annex was essential to the U.S. exhibition and contended that the artists in

the consulate office should be included in the competition. U.S. officials in Rome hoped to argue that because Rauschenberg was being shown in the annex, this would force the Committee to acknowledge the annexed works as official, simply because Rauschenberg was "considered eminently eligible for [the] grand prize."²³ While the Committee supported Marcazzan, the USIA insisted by telegram: "any changes [in the] installation plan would mean new selection which [is] unfeasible at this late date."²⁴ The Agency maintained that Rauschenberg, Johns, Noland and Louis could not be exhibited in the pavilion--the space was simply inadequate.²⁵ Attempts were made to negotiate around the regulation; U.S. diplomats from the American Embassy in Rome (including the U.S. Ambassador) appealed to various officials to review the case. Efforts to negotiate with the Director of Cultural Relations, Italian Foreign Office, proved fruitless. As the U.S. Embassy in Rome reported,

Again our arguments to no avail. Italians adamant: only artists represented on Biennale grounds eligible for prize. This of course is reversal of initial agreement as understood by us, Solomon and Bingham; but Post [U.S. Embassy] now convinced Italians will not change present position. 26

Solomon and Bingham were faced with a choice of limiting the exhibition to a size suitable for the pavilion space or carrying out the plan to annex the show, at the risk of eliminating two of the "Four Germinal Painters"--Rauschenberg and Johns--from the competition. In the end, the Agency elected to take the risk, but Solomon included one work from both Johns and Rauschenberg in the

U.S. pavilion, hoping that this gesture of compliance with regulations would satisfy Marcazzan and the Committee. From Solomon's perspective, the annex was a necessary component to represent adequately the state of American culture. Ironically, this representation of U.S. art rested not only with the works themselves, but on the physical expression of U.S. expansionism as the exhibition spilled over the confines of the Giardini into the former consulate office. If Solomon missed the implications at the time of his decision to include the annex, European critics wasted no time making the connection for him once the Biennale had officially opened.

Given the many problems facing the USIA while organizing the show, including the negotiations and expenditures involved, it may appear odd in retrospect that the U.S. government did not simply delegate the project to a private institution which had always handled it in the past. However, participation in the Biennale had become an important part of the administration's cultural policies. Government sponsorship of the Biennale was characterized by an unprecedented confidence in American culture, most notably on the part of official, government institutions, a response that was largely the outgrowth of Kennedy's insistence that the arts should receive at least as much attention as technological and scientific developments.

In terms of concrete policy changes regarding culture, bureaucrats seized on the liberal image Kennedy promoted and argued that government involvement, previously regarded as a constraint on free creative expression, was indeed a necessity if Americans were to attain excellence in the arts. Like much of the New Frontier rhetoric, the issue was posed as a "problem" where hard-hitting

policies could be systematically applied. Schlesinger, in a 1962 speech outlining the Kennedy Administration's policy on culture, explained that because Americans had more leisure time, they faced a "critical moment" in culture; the nation could succumb to the leveling of culture, as predicted by the "pessimists" or rise to the "optimists" vision of a new Renaissance.²⁷ Thus, the problem was posed in terms where the Kennedy government would be seen as errant should it refuse to sponsor the arts:

If our civilization is poised, so to speak, between vulgarization and fulfillment, then we would be remiss in not doing what we can for our country, as in the realm of defense or employment or civic freedom. 28

Schlesinger's strategy not only laid the foundation for government sponsorship, but also added a dimension of urgency to cultural programs by placing them on a par with defense or civic freedom. The fact that the argument issued from the presidency gave it further credence and legitimacy as a policy to be adopted by the government as a whole.²⁹ Government became the liberal sponsor of the "new Renaissance," but the links between culture and more "pragmatic" issues of foreign policy were not to be overlooked. As Schlesinger continued,

Our times require greatness as well as bigness-- and greatness is a matter, not of the arsenal or of the pocketbook, but of the spirit. We will win world understanding of our policy and purposes not through the force of our arms or the array of our wealth but through the splendor of our ideals. 30

Thus the Kennedy Administration developed a double-edged argument in favor of culture. On the one hand, there was a "community responsibility" to sustain culture on the philanthropic grounds that it was an essential component of society; on the other, the arts and humanities could be a pragmatic solution to foreign policy problems where economic aid and military clout were not "enough." Domestic spending on culture might be justified by invoking national pride,³¹ but investment in cultural "exports" such as traveling exhibitions required a more persuasive strategy in which Schlesinger's "greatness of spirit" was only one component. Senator Jacob Javits, one of the most outspoken proponents of the arts, explained in more candid terms:

It is high time that we, as a people, realize that the visual and performing arts are not a luxury but a necessity in the defense of our free society against the backdrop of the cold war. ³²

For agencies devoted to "information" programs abroad, the more general program reforms which Schlesinger and Javits sought were translated into concrete policy shifts. The USIA turned from "programs of persuasion" and "campaigns of truth," characteristic of the 1950s, to more subtle cultural programs.³³ This change was designed to concentrate on the strengths of American society rather than to emphasize the "evils of communism" or refute communist propaganda.³⁴ While cultural programs played a major role in all countries where the USIA operated, they had a specific significance in Europe, particularly as economic aid was shifting to the

underdeveloped Third World nations. These programs became all the more important as officials noted European hostility towards American culture: a 1961 article appearing in Foreign Affairs reported that

the image of the U.S. as an intellectual wasteland and of American writers, artists and thinkers as exiles in their own country...is almost uncontested in European intellectual circles today. 36

Equally disturbing was the fact that the problem was exacerbated by Soviet policies in Western Europe:

...anti-Americanism in the form of critical hostility toward American thought and culture has actually been increasing. In recent years it has been steadily promoted by Soviet cultural diplomacy, which has given highest priority to Western Europe since 1951. 37

Such fears were similarly expressed to members of Congress by USIA officials. While presenting the 1962 budget proposal from the USIA to the House Appropriations Committee, the assistant area director for Europe argued for program funding in Europe because "events have shown that we cannot safely take those countries for granted." ³⁸ The failure of the Kennedy Administration to assure an "Atlantic Partnership" with Western European countries (a plan foiled by the French in their refusal to admit Britain into the EEC, along with their threat to withdraw from NATO) made it clear that the Europeans might be more intransigent than the U.S. expected. Armed force was an impossibility, but economic aid was not enough, and it was with this realization that made the USIA's new approach to policy even

more important.

It was clear to the government that a new cultural policy must be implemented, particularly in light of the cold war arguments presented by various advocates of government sponsorship in the arts. In light of the USSR's cultural programs in Europe, an American counter-balance became all the more exigent in European countries. Yet the United States somehow had to differentiate itself from other cultural programs--that is, the government needed to foster a policy which was particularly American in its approach and content. Kennedy himself proposed a possible strategy:

Above all, we are coming to understand that the arts incarnate the creativity of a free society. We know that a totalitarian society can promote the arts in its own way--that it can arrange splendid productions of opera and ballet...But art means more than the resuscitation of the past; it means that free and unconfined search for new ways of expressing the experience of the present and the vision of the future...A free government is the reflection of a people's will and desire--and ultimately their taste. It is also, at its best, a leading force, an example, and a teacher... 39

The administration had found yet another "new frontier"--the avant-garde. By invoking the new in either its present or future form, Kennedy differentiated U.S. policy from that of "totalitarian" society while simultaneously implying that his administration was a progressive example--even a teacher--to its citizenry. While the avant-garde had previously been enlisted in the Cold War cause, Kennedy proposed to lead the battle himself. The New Frontier differentiated itself from previous cultural policies through its

outspoken admission of the alliance between government and the avant-garde; the liberal tone of Kennedy's administration promised that progressive cultural programs need not be discussed in hushed tone, but were presented as part of the Chief Executive's overall policy.⁴⁰ By equating the avant-garde with freedom and creativity, government finally "came to understand," as Robert Frost had predicted, the benefits of uniting "poetry with power." Where military and economic might had failed, the avant-garde could be dispatched as the persuasive agent of democracy. In concentrating on the arts, the Kennedy Administration--and the USIA--could claim to be a part

of a nationwide movement towards excellence-- a movement that had its start in the admiration of expertness and skill in our technical society, but that now demands quality in all realms of human achievement. It is part, too, of a feeling that art is the great unifying and humanizing experience. 41

The advances of science and technology required a counterpoint-- the creative impulse, the human touch. In less abstract terms, Kennedy's cool, rational "brinkmanship" could be humanized through his seemingly pressing concern for creativity and expression. Thus it is not surprising to find Kennedy calling for cultural programs which would implement "imaginative policy direction, unification, and vigorous direction."⁴² In Venice, the USIA planned just such a program where unity, vigor and above all, direction picked up where imagination left off.

NOTES

1

Alloway, The Venice Biennale, p. 39.

2

Ibid., p. 137. The Grand Prizes awarded in the post-war period prior to 1964 were as follows: 1948, Georges Braque; 1950, Henri Matisse; 1952, Raoul Dufy; 1954, Max Ernst; 1956, Jacques Villon; 1958, Osvaldo Licini; 1960, Jean Fautrier; and 1962, Alfred Manessier.

3

Ibid.

4

Ibid.

5

In 1950, the U.S. pavilion featured works by Pollock, Gorky, de Kooning; in 1954, de Kooning; in 1956, de Kooning, Kline, Pollock; in 1958, Rothko; in 1960, Guston, Hoffman and Kline.

6

USIA Operations Memorandum, July 3, 1964, from USIS Tokyo to USIA Washington, Venice Biennale files, USIA (64-045), (Washington, D.C.: National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institute).

7

From the first São Paulo Biennial in 1951, through the first ten years of its existence, it was scarcely noticed as evidenced by the lack of publicity coverage in major art magazines compared to the notices devoted to the Venice Biennale for the same time period.

8

"How in São Paulo," Washington [D.C.] Evening Star, October 8, 1963.

9

Correspondence from August Heckscher to Edward R. Murrow and Lucius Battle, May 10, 1962. USIA file 64-045, "Miscellaneous."

10

This contrasts with the previous situation when MoMA appeared to preserve artistic freedom by providing private support for the U.S. entry at the Biennale. All other countries relied on direct government sponsorship. For a discussion of MoMA's connections with U.S. foreign policy, see Cockcroft, "Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War," pp. 39-41.

11

While the government appeared to be taking on the project by "default"--and indeed, this is how the press reported it--there were alternatives to direct government sponsorship. On behalf of the American Federation of Art, Roy Neuberger, wealthy collector and then a trustee of the AFA, wrote to the USIA: "The AFA is willing, indeed anxious, to replace MoMA but would need help from the U.S. government." USIA correspondence memo, May 15, 1962, Venice Biennale files. Apparently the problem of "loss of freedom" engendered by government sponsorship in the arts had become a dead issue, or at least one to be ignored.

12

It is interesting to note that Bingham rejected candidates such as Adeline Breskine, for example, because of their associations with MoMA or previous Venice Biennales. Apparently the show was designed, from the outset, to be set apart from MoMA's tradition. (Interview with Alice B. Denney, Assistant Director of the American Pavilion, XXXII Venice Biennale, by telephone, January 11, 1985).

13

Interview with Lois Bingham, by telephone, June 30, 1984.

14

Solomon had been involved in several shows which included both Johns and Rauschenberg: "Second Generation" (Jewish Museum, 1957), "The Popular Image Exhibition" (Washington Gallery of Modern Art, 1963), "Robert Rauschenberg" (Jewish Museum, 1963), and "Jasper Johns" (Jewish Museum, 1964). He also wrote several articles featuring these artists.

15

Bingham interview. I attempted to confirm Bingham's story with the Venice Biennale archivist Dr. Umbro Apollonio (a member of the Biennale Committee in 1964) but received no response. The matter is complicated further by Alice Denney who claims that neither Biennale nor USIA officials had anything to do with the selection of artists; according to Denney, the entire show was devised by Solomon with her help (Denney interview).

16

USIA Budget, Venice Biennale files.

17

Here again ambiguities emerge as stories diverge. The USIA maintained that agreements had been made with Biennale officials, whereby the annex would be considered an official part of the U.S. exhibition. Unfortunately, the USIA never had these agreements put in writing, an oversight which was to become problematic later when Biennale officials denied that agreements had ever been made.

18

The proximity to Guggenheim's gallery provided an interesting contrast in terms of the trends of modern art. Guggenheim herself detested pop art and championed Abstract Expressionist works. In 1964, this created a situation where the avant-garde gallery was showing work from the previous decade, while the USIA was exhibiting the latest, more controversial work in their annex.

19

Correspondence from Alan Solomon to Lois Bingham, February 12, 1964.

20

The show featured 22 works by Rauschenberg and 21 by Johns, whereas Noland and Louis had 13 canvases each.

21

Director of Exhibition Division, USIA, Robert Sivard attested to the potential controversy in the pop artists' work when he responded to Solomon's proposal to extend the exhibition: "I see no problems [with expanding the pop art side instead of the abstract painters] unless the works chosen can be called 'gags' rather than real attempts at aesthetic statements." USIA Memo, February 14, 1964, Venice Biennale files.

22

Telegram from U.S. Embassy, Rome, to USIA, Washington, D.C., April 21, 1964, Venice Biennale files.

23

Telegram from U.S. Embassy, Rome, to USIA, Washington, D.C., April 28, 1964: "Would be useful to know whether planned to locate Rauschenberg works in consulate building. This might be clincher argument as he is considered eminently eligible for grand prize," Venice Biennale files Unfortunately for us, the Embassy failed to include the reasons for its assumption that Rauschenberg was the likely winner of the competition in their communique.

24

Telegram from USIA, Washington, D.C., to U.S. Embassy, Rome, April 28, 1964, Venice Biennale files.

25

Bingham interview. Lawrence Alloway later claimed that Noland refused to give up any of his space in the pavilion, citing as his source Calvin Tomkins, "The Big Show in Venice," Harper's Magazine 230 (April 1965), pp. 98-104, passim; however, this is not stated in Tomkins' piece, nor did Denney or Bingham offer this as an explanation. (Alloway, p. 150).

26

Telegram, from U.S. Embassy, Rome, to USIA, Washington, D.C., May 7, 1964, Venice Biennale files.

27

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "Government and the Arts," (speech to the American Federation of Arts, April 12, 1962). Reprinted in U.S. Congress, Senate, 88th Cong., 1st sess., 15 August 1963, Congressional Record vol,109 (part II), p. 15136. The cultural debate between the "pessimists" and "optimists" will be discussed more fully in Chapter 2.

28

Ibid.

29

The more receptive attitude toward official sponsorship of cultural programs is evidenced by legislation such as that which established the Fullbright Exchange Program in 1961 (overwhelmingly passed by the Senate, 79-5; see Larson, p. 173, n. 35). Culture and its role in government policy were increasingly considered in Congress; see for example U.S. Congress, House, Representative Kearns speaking for the establishment of a Federal Advisory Council on the Arts (H.R. 4172), 87th Cong., 1st sess., 20 September 1961, Congressional Record, vol. 107 (part 15), pp. 20487-9 and U.S. Congress, Senate, "Freedom versus Coercion," Senator Pell speaking for USIA cultural programs, 88th Con., 1st sess., 5 November 1963, Congressional Record, vol,109 (part 16), pp. 20957-8.

30

Schlesinger, p. 15136.

31

See Larson, pp. 159-160 for a brief discussion on the success of this strategy.

32

Correspondence from Javits to Secretary of Labor, Arthur Goldberg, *ibid.*, p. 160 (fn. 15). Larson argues that this Cold War rhetoric was less effective and less popular in the early 60s, saying it was more characteristic of the 50s preoccupation with the "Communist threat." While this may be true of arguments for government sponsorship of culture within the country, foreign policy was, as shall be shown, still closely linked with Cold War policy. Larson's contention that Kennedy's cultural policies were philanthropically inspired seems grounded in a longing for the good old days of Camelot, made all the stronger by current cutbacks in cultural programs.

33

Philip H. Coombs, "The Past and Future in Perspective," p. 144, in The American Assembly, Cultural Affairs and Foreign Relations, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963). Coombs was appointed Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs by Kennedy, a position he held until April 1962 when he resigned to rejoin the Ford Foundation.

34

George N. Shuster, "The Nature and Development of U.S. Cultural Relations," p. 30, in *ibid.* Shuster was an executive board representative on UNESCO and had served on the general advisory committee to the Division of Cultural Relations in the State Department.

35

W. McNeil Lowry and Gertrude S. Hooker, "The Role of the Arts and the Humanities," pp. 72-3, in *ibid.* Lowry was director of the Ford Foundation Program in the Humanities and the Arts; Hooker was a staff member of the Ford Foundation Program in the Humanities and the Arts and was with the Cultural Affairs Division of the USIS in Rome (1951-1959) and in Paris (1959-1961).

36

Julian Marias, "The Unreal America," Foreign Affairs 39 (July 1961), p. 589.

37

Ibid., p. 73.

38

Coombs, p. 72.

39

[John F. Kennedy], "The Late President's Last Reflections on the Arts," Saturday Review 47 (March 28, 1964), p. 17.

40

In this respect, the government's overt role in cultural sponsorship had advanced considerably from the initial post-war period, when Truman made his famous pronouncement, "If that is art, I'm a Hottentot" with regard to Yasuo Kuniyoshi's Circus Girl Resting, featured in the State Department exhibition, "Advancing American Art" (1946-48). Truman's comments did not keep his administration from using the avant-garde to advance its ideological aims, but officially the hand of government did not touch such hot items, having been burned so badly by the response to the show mentioned above.

41

Kennedy, Saturday Review, p. 16.

42

John F. Kennedy, quoted by Lowry and Hooker, p. 73.

CHAPTER 2

State Avant-Gardism at the Biennale

In an attempt to communicate to the world America's new-found gains in culture under the Kennedy administration, the USIA purported to present the most exciting artistic innovations the United States could offer: Pop Art and Post-Painterly Abstraction. The show emphasized the latest developments in art, choosing relatively young artists to represent the New Frontier, in keeping with the administration's emphasis on invention and creativity, particularly as it pertained to culture. Yet the selection of artists was not simply a group presented under the banner of youth and innovation; the works of Rauschenberg, Johns, Noland and Louis addressed similar issues despite the seeming opposition between the styles of abstraction and figuration, as the Agency explained:

These artists, all involved and deeply committed to the idea of attaching a new importance to subjective feeling and to the expression of personal responses, represent one climax of the long process of liberating the individual and his unique sensibility from any external demands or limits... They transform and manipulate visual experience, either rejecting the 'real world' in favor of a new, created abstract world...or bring real objects directly into the work of art thereby giving them a new reality, in new context, absolutely different from their previous existence in the external world. 1

Despite two very different expressions, the works in the exhibition found unifying themes with the "transformation of visual experience" and "liberated sensibility."

Yet it was not immediately clear how this concept of coherence applied to such disparate works as Noland's Turnsole (1962, figure 2)

and Rauschenberg's Bed (1955, figure 3), both featured in the Biennale exhibition. The high craftsmanship and refinement of Noland's abstraction would seem to be negated by Rauschenberg's dirty bedclothes splattered with paint, which, according to Newsweek, recalled "a police photo of a murder bed after the corpse has been removed."³ These two works seemed unlikely bedfellows in an exhibition purporting to present a coherent picture of American culture. To Alan Solomon, however, these divergent currents of American contemporary art formed a seemingly well-balanced overview of cultural development in the United States; abstract art and figurative imagery developed side by side. The effect produced by the respective works "balanced" each other out, as Solomon explained in the introduction of the Biennale catalogue:

[Neo-Dada] has had a rapid and widespread impact in the last few years, because of the provocative and assertive nature of its ideas and practices. The new abstract movement, [Post-Painterly Abstraction] on the other hand, depending as it does on a more passive and contemplative condition, makes demands to which the response has been slower. 4

It appeared that the U.S. artists offered something for everyone: the abstractionists' work was more withdrawn and cerebral, while the Neo-Dadaists provided an art which was lively and daring, more culturally "engaged" through the use of subjects and materials drawn from everyday life. But the "balanced" culture presented in Venice was not what initially appeared to be--for even the spokesman for the two "germinal" movements, Alan Solomon, tipped the scales in favor of Rauschenberg's work, as we shall see.

Since the Biennale was one of the first forums in which Noland and Rauschenberg were within the sight of the bulk of the international art community, the text of the U.S. catalogue--prepared by Solomon--was carefully structured in an attempt to establish these artists both as descendants of a modernist heritage as well as the most advanced contemporary artists of the time. The influence of European art was acknowledged, but specific connections were downplayed or cited as precedents radically altered by Rauschenberg and Noland. While the European influence was important, Solomon showed it to be almost a handicap, as in his discussion of Louis's paintings: because of their "uncompromised voluptuousness" recalling Monet, Vuillard and Matisse, the works possessed "an uncomplicated sensuousness which belongs to the past."⁵ By contrast, Noland's canvases, "although they are just as deeply committed to pure color sensations, confront us with a certain toughness, a certain psychological seriousness which makes them much more than an untrammelled delight for the eye."⁶ While the European heritage was worthy of acknowledgement, it was relegated to the past, when aesthetic simplicity placidly ruled with "uncomplicated sensuousness." Louis was differentiated from Noland through his "debt" to European painters--a debt which Solomon claimed made his work more traditional and, at bottom, passe. Noland's work shares some common characteristics with Louis and the Europeans, yet Solomon postulates a certain seriousness or "toughness" in his paintings which he suggests is decidedly not European and consequently much more complex.

A European pedigree is also claimed for Johns and Rauschenberg

through the works of Duchamp and Picasso, but this historical link is similarly qualified:

Despite such connections with the past, these new American artists have brought an entirely new sensibility to bear upon their work, a sensibility which has grown out of a response to the particular environment in which they have lived and developed. 7

While Rauschenberg and Johns might inspire memories of the past--Duchamp, Picasso, Dada--it was their particularly American interpretation, their "new sensibility," which made their contribution unique. Their links with the past were acknowledged, but almost as quickly dismissed, for it was not European art which lay at the root of this new aesthetic.⁸

By the early 1960s, the success of Abstract Expressionism prepared the ground for a new tradition, a new pedigree, in American art. Noland and Rauschenberg's work was connected not only to a European tradition of modernism, but also to a more recent heritage of avant-garde painting in America. This was an important, if not obvious strategy in terms of establishing the unique qualities of these artists on the basis of nationality. However, while the germinal painters were indebted to the work of the Abstract Expressionists, they were also critical of their predecessors. By

the end of the fifties some painters, according to Solomon,

had come to feel that the apparent directness of this kind of painting was based more on superficial considerations (of color, texture and spatial complexity) which only appeared to communicate the true feelings of the artist, that he remained detached in the crucial sense, and that these pathetic intrusions detracted from the purity of the painting situation and from the potential of a nobler and less manifestly self-centered mode of expression. 9

Thus the "second generation" of painters rejected the angst of the action painters; contrary to the heavy, alienated aesthetic of the Abstract Expressionists, the younger artists turned to a cool "post-painterly" abstraction, or daring, lively dada. The "pathetic intrusions" of expressive brushstrokes and other "superficial considerations" were replaced with strategies more in keeping with the "purity of the painting situation"--paint-stained canvases of abstract imagery--or "nobler," less "self-centered" preoccupations such as Neo-Dada, which addressed the world in a more direct, yet still emotionally detached, way. The aims of the Abstract Expressionists, seen as a kind of modern romanticism where the emotional sincerity of the artist was revealed through the splashes of paint, were rejected for a cool and detached aesthetic. Solomon explained

they [the "Germinal Painters"] have matured in a post-Freudian climate in which the new psychology has been assimilated in the general culture over a period of twenty or thirty years. Unlike the Europeans, the Americans have no clearly defined ties to the past, and they have found a new path for themselves in the present. 10

The angst-ridden 1950s had given way to a "new path" where alienation was assimilated, to the point where it was no longer particularly relevant. Unfettered by the bonds of history, the new artists were free to explore new avenues of cool, indifferent expression without the "hand-wringing" of the preceding generation.¹¹ Abstract Expressionism was part of the past, an historical movement appropriate for the 50s, maybe, but certainly outdated for the new generation, which was filled with optimism untainted by the problems of the past--the Bomb, the Holocaust, the war. Out of the old romanticism sprang the new classicism--but who was to carry the torch for this new frontier, Frost's new Augustan age?

At the outset, Kenneth Noland appeared to be the heir apparent to the Abstract Expressionists and consequently a likely candidate for international fame. With his restrained brushstrokes, reduced to stains delineating his targets and chevrons, he represented a new sort of aesthetic--the "new classicism" in its most restrained form.¹² Since his work was featured in the pavilion on the Giardini grounds he was in a secure position for the Grand Prize competition, unlike the artists featured in the annex. His abstract paintings clearly developed out of Abstract Expressionism, and he had in fact been described by the Abstract Expressionists' foremost critic Clement Greenberg as a successor to that movement. As early as 1954, Greenberg had selected Noland (and Louis) for the "Emerging Talent" show at the Samuel Kootz Gallery and in 1960, the influential critic pronounced that Louis and Noland "are the only painters to have come up in American art since that 'first wave' [Abstract Expressionism] who approach its level."¹³ Greenberg's approval of these artists was

hardly surprising, for this "second wave" of American painters was well-suited to Greenberg's conception of modernism, with its emphasis on two-dimensionality.¹⁴ Additionally, Greenberg's contention that an historical dialectic exists between painterly and linear styles was confirmed, in his view, through Noland and Louis. From the worked, painterly surfaces of the Abstract Expressionists grew a more restrained, linear approach; the "excesses" of the action painters of the 50s and the fact that the style had become institutionalized and fashionable caused Greenberg to abandon the "painterly" aesthetic in search of a style which carried on the tenets of formalism in a way which conformed to his historical suppositions. Thus, for Greenberg, the works of Louis and Noland presented a logical sequence in his historical continuum of painting. The elements which made their work of foremost importance to Greenberg are described in his 1960 article on the two artists:

...just as in Louis's case--and in the middle-period Pollock's--the picture [by Noland] succeeds, when it does succeed, by reaffirming in the end...the limitedness of pictorial space as such, with all its rectangularity and flatness and opacity... 15

According to Greenberg, their work transcended the sculptural effects produced by the painterly style which were rooted in cubism; this was an important development--based on work by earlier artists such as Rothko, Still and Newman--for it allowed the works to develop more fully the essential elements of flatness, color--the "pure" elements of painting.¹⁶

Thus, Noland's Turnsole (figure 3), was representative of a work

which readily accommodated Greenberg's theories of modernism; the flat concentric rings, devoid of texture because of the stain-technique Noland employed, formed a visual essay on the relationship of colors and limits of the canvas. Greenberg noted

...the particular triumph of Noland's painting is the way in which it specifies and at the same time generalizes off-white (or for that matter, brown, yellow, or red) 'space', making it seem both very literal and very abstract. 17

In particular, Greenberg credited Noland for his gifts as a colorist--an element of painting hitherto neglected by the painterly style, with its "easy effects of spontaneity."¹⁸ It was this new "purity" in painting, concentrating principally on color, whereby a work could "find the guarantee of its standards of quality as well as of its independence."¹⁹ Noland's work provided an artistic demonstration of Greenberg's theory of modernism; the generalized way in which Greenberg wrote of Noland's paintings, with almost no references to specific works, seemed only to reinforce the fact that the works were illustrations of Greenberg's texts. This is not to suggest that Noland was simply a helpless pawn in Greenberg's game; on the contrary, the artist himself described his own work in terms of color exploration and elimination of structural constraints. However, Noland's statements clearly reflect a close connection with Greenberg's thoughts on modernism: "a breakthrough also means a limitation, a reduction of possibilities"²⁰, a statement which bears remarkable resemblance to Greenberg's notion of self-criticism within each medium. Noland also shared with Greenberg a vague aversion to

cubism, as he explained in his comments on structure:

structure is an element profoundly to be respected, but, too, an engagement with it leaves one in the backwaters of what are basically cubist concerns. In the best color painting, structure is nowhere evident, or nowhere self-declaring. 21

Like Greenberg, Noland suggests that structural concerns lead to a cubist straightjacket where nothing new--especially in the realm of color--can be created. Whether the critic or painter arrived at the same point independently, the jacket of formalism was equally fitting for both; and since Greenberg's reputation far surpassed the young artist's at that time, one might assume that the critic could lay claim to tailoring the "advance" at least in theory.

Greenberg's views played a substantial role in the critical reception of Noland's works. His formidable influence as a critic--perhaps the most important critic of the 1950s--made his artistic "prophecies" for the 1960s almost an institution, demonstrating his powerful grip on the critical discourse on art.²² Yet at the same time, the very institutionalization of Greenberg's view of modernism became grounds for a rebellion of sorts on the part of many critics.²³ Just as Abstract Expressionism was increasingly associated with the past, so too did Greenberg's criticism become entrenched as a tradition, made rigid by the very dialectics through which he pronounced the next successive move toward "freshness" in art. Since modernism, in Greenbergian terms, could only be expressed through abstraction, flatness, and color, and painting was perpetually confined to limits between the painterly or linear

dialectic, developments outside of Greenberg's conceptual framework were summarily ignored. This feature became increasingly troublesome to critics such as Priscilla Colt writing in the College Art Journal:

What disturbs this reader is his [Greenberg's] recurring intimation that there is a kind of predestiny working itself out in the history of style...The critical corollary to this is that we need watch only the avant-grade [sic] (presuming it can be easily identified) and that we may then relegate to limbo that art which does not fulfill at least some of its conditions. 24

Those whom Greenberg relegated to "artistic limbo" usually went unnamed, grouped anonymously as purveyors of "safe taste." When he actually acknowledged artists straying from the Greenbergian fold, he attempted to include them as less important but worthy of note because of their relationship to his theory (Jasper Johns, for example)²⁵ or completely dismissable, again, in relation to his own standards of excellence. This he expressed most clearly in his sarcastic critique of the Neo-Dadas (obviously with Rauschenberg and other pop artists such as Oldenburg and Dine in mind). It is worth quoting at length, for it is one of the few critical "pronouncements" Greenberg chose to make on artists outside of his vision of

modernism, and one which reinforced the opposition to his art criticism:

Whatever novel objects they represent or insert in their works, not one of them has taken a chance with colour or design that the Cubists or Abstract Expressionists did not take before them...Nor has any one of them, whether he harpoons stuffed whales to plane surfaces, or fills water-closet bowls with diamonds, yet dared to arrange these things outside the directional lines of the 'all-over' Cubist grid. The results have in every case a conventional and Cubist prettiness that hardly entitles them to be included under the heading 'After Abstract Expressionism.' Nor can those artists, either, be discussed under this heading whose contribution consists in depicting stuffed chickens instead of dead pheasants, or coffee cans or pieces of pastry instead of flowers in vases. Not that I do not find the clear and straightforward academic handling of their pictures refreshing after the turgidities of Abstract Expressionism; yet the effect is only momentary, since novelty, as distinct from originality, has no staying power. 26

His easy dismissal of these developments (mentioned only in the closing paragraph of his lengthy essay) was the source of much consternation among critics. Increasingly Greenberg's criticism, usually focusing on the Post-Painterly Abstractionists, was viewed as deterministic and opinionated. The resulting frustration was summarized by Max Kozloff, in a letter to the editor of Art

International, where he attacked Greenberg's determinism:

In what now appears to be the aftermath of Abstract Expressionism, there are only two painters of any significance--Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland. While he does not deny they are heirs to the recent past, Clement Greenberg presents them as the chief harbingers of the future. That they are isolated abstractionists, however, in an environment which has swung massively away from abstraction, prevents them from being, in any sense, representative of a new situation. 27

The fact that Noland's work was so closely aligned with Greenberg's criticism forced a situation whereby critics who came down against Greenberg felt necessarily bound to critique the artist's work as well. Often an attack on Greenberg was made through the artists whom he himself cited as most representative of his own theories of modernism. Thus, in a review of Noland's works, Donald Judd and Vivien Raynor write:

Noland is obviously one of the best painters anywhere...but his paintings are somewhat less strong than the several kinds of three-dimensional work. Painting has to be as powerful as any kind of art; it can't claim a special identity, an existence for its own sake as a medium...Painting now is not quite sufficient, although only in terms of plain power. It lacks the specificity and power of actual materials, actual color and space... advances in art certainly are not always formal ones. They always involve innovations, but the actual formal advance, measured by the generalization of historical linearity, may be small. A realistic history would not be a linear one of form... 28

Like Kozloff, Judd and Raynor begin with a discussion of Noland's

paintings in relation to "three-dimensional work," which they defend. The text then drifts from specifics relating to the paintings, shifting to an attack on the theories underlying them. What begins ostensibly as a review of Noland's work evolves into a rebuttal of the ideas Greenberg proposed most straightforwardly in his 1963 essay "Modernist Painting." Greenberg's notion of a limiting self-criticism of the medium, particularly as it applied to painting, is based on a false notion, according to the authors, that painting can lay claim to a "special identity." Further, the "advances" in painting (for Greenberg these were restricted to formal ones) created a linear history of art as a succession of formal developments, which, as Kozloff pointed out, was an inaccurate reading of the contemporary situation,²⁹ regardless of the value judgements one might wish to impose on the work.

The dialogue between Greenberg and critics who challenged his tenets of modernism had a particular significance at the Biennale. One might argue that Solomon had in fact "sided" with Greenberg's position simply because Noland was featured in such a prominent position in the official U.S. pavilion. Yet a close reading of the catalogue reveals that Solomon described the work of the Post-Painterly Abstractionists in terms which, while sharing some points of commonality with Greenberg, placed other concerns over formal developments. There is a current within Solomon's text which parallels Greenberg's views--we need only recall that Solomon set the "Germinal Painters" off against the romantic, angst-ridden style of the Abstract Expressionists, just as Greenberg declared that Noland's restrained, "cool," color stains countered the fashionable painterly style--yet the resulting "new classicism" advocated by

Solomon was not based entirely on form, but rather, ambiguity and expressiveness. These latter elements were significant not so much in relation to the immediate past of Abstract Expressionism; instead, they were intimately connected with Solomon's discourse on Rauschenberg, setting up a dialogue between the two movements (Neo-Dada and Post-Painterly Abstraction) in which one would ultimately emerge triumphant. Noland's role in the Biennale, aside from forming a part of the "germinal painters", served as a comparative model against which Rauschenberg's work would be measured. Thus Solomon, unlike Greenberg, not only presented Noland as the new trend in American painting, but also used his work to show through comparison exactly how "new" Rauschenberg was. The "void" created by the critics' rejection of Greenberg's theories was one which Rauschenberg might be capable of filling, and this seemed even more likely given the fact that reviewers, disgruntled with deterministic formalism,³¹ appeared to be turning to Neo-Dada for relief.

Initially, Solomon's catalogue entry for Noland appears to be redressing the damage done by Greenberg's crusade to establish abstraction and formal concerns as the only viable artistic expressions. Perhaps for this reason, Noland is discussed in relation to the group of "germinal painters" rather than being singled out as the most important artist. In contrast to Greenberg, Solomon attempts to relate Noland's work to issues which extended

beyond the limits of formalism. Thus, while Noland, along with the other painters, has

turned away from political and social preoccupations, attaching a new importance to the human condition and to the value of individual experience, 32

this "disengagement" from active social concerns was not, to be read as pessimistic retreat. A qualifier is added, one which departs from Greenberg's assessment of Noland while also differentiating the pop artists from the Abstract Expressionists:

they have chosen to engage themselves wholly, as individuals, in the richness and ambiguity of modern life; their acceptance of the contemporary world is optimistic, not cynical.³³

Unlike Greenberg who generally described Noland's work in purely formal terms, Solomon suggests that the works are a response to modern life. The abstract works do not represent escapism; rather, Solomon proposes that the paintings relate to the contemporary world by virtue of their expressions of individual experience, and that this expression, in contrast to the Abstract Expressionists' comment on alienation resulting from modern life, was actually a positive and optimistic one. While Solomon never actually elaborates on this position, he suggests that the artwork is "engaged" through its embrace of the positive aspects of society, attaching new importance to human expression through ambiguity and optimism. It is through these latter features that Solomon not only differentiated Noland (and, in the pages which followed, Rauschenberg) from the preceding

generation, but also carved out a niche to legitimize, through his "unique" approach, his artistic contributions.

In the text devoted to Noland, Solomon employs a formal language which concentrates on generalities rather than specific examples of the works; indeed, not one painting is mentioned by name. His analysis of the works thereby takes on the somewhat dubious distinction of being as abstract as the works he professes to analyze, evidenced by the description of the effect of Noland's abstractions: they "depend[s] on constantly changing readings of forms kept in precarious tension despite the clarity of the geometry"³⁴ and the work "deliberately maintains a formal situation which prevents resolution...a visual interplay between precise and indeterminate definitions of boundaries."³⁵ From the specific to the indefinite and back again, the viewer is guided through an aesthetic labyrinth which defies definitive explanation. "Vigor and intensity" in Noland's work give way to the "enigmatic and indeterminate."³⁶ At his most specific, Solomon explains that the images "appear to expand and contract, to move out toward the spectator through the action of color, even though the tonal surfaces are flat and spatially discrete."³⁷ It is this formal aspect of the work which, despite Solomon's tentative description, forms the most active element in the work, setting up a relationship between the viewer and the paintings. While Solomon provides no specific examples, the effect he describes is evident in Sunshine (1961, fig. 4), featured in the Biennale. From the painting's central point of orange-yellow, the eye moves outward, drawn to the same orange-yellow of the middle ring. From there the eye jumps further outward to the

cooler color rings of blue and green, then draws back to the brighter tones in the center of the composition. Solomon suggests that this formal relationship, the effects of expanding and contracting colors, creates an "ambiguous assertiveness" drawing "the viewer into a much more active relationship with the art."³⁸ Yet this "active relationship" rests primarily on the viewer's interest in the extent of formal resolution (or lack thereof), limited by the constraints of color. Since the Biennale exhibition concentrated on those works by Noland without the "painterly" touch, where splashes of color extended beyond the concentric rings, the focus was primarily on the formal effects of color arrangements without the distractions of brushstrokes. Thus Solomon, like Greenberg, emphasizes Noland's formal developments in color in terms of the paintings he chose to select, yet he attempts to go beyond hermetic formalism to include the viewer in his account of the works' effect.

At bottom, Solomon's analysis rests on the concept of ambiguity--the "undefinable and enigmatic quality" which gives the paintings a certain "presence," as he describes it.³⁹ If this seems all too abstract, Solomon explains further, pointing out that this "presence" results not only

from the visual phenomena introduced into the painting, but, more important, from the high level of feeling, from the intuitive manipulation of effects which are kept suggestive, imprecise in meaning, evocative and equivocal. 40

Here Solomon himself reaches new heights of ambiguity, since, on the one hand, we are told the works are "detached in the crucial sense" (see page 43), while at the same time they record a "high level of

feeling." While this "feeling" remains undefined, one can at least gather (through sheer force of repetition) that it is 1) equivocal and 2) optimistic. Should the reader despair in search of substantive criticism, Solomon offers a parting clue for the artist's aesthetic:

Noland's special distinction lies in his understanding of the possibilities of a more subtle and complex exploitation of expressiveness, ambiguity, and the special vision of the artist, to create a new abstract painting. 41

Aside from the fact that Solomon unwittingly attests to his own skills as a creator of abstract texts, the passage leaves the reader with an insatiable thirsting for more in the way of specifics. The "new classicism," for all of its "ambiguous assertiveness" ultimately falls into the chasm of formalism-cum-mystification--thus it is small wonder that Solomon prefaced his discussion with the qualifier that it relied on a "more passive and contemplative condition," for the work was inexorably linked to formal developments in art. Crediting the work's primary appeal to formal developments or equivocal expressiveness, Solomon simply reinforced the "passive" reading of the work.

Perhaps the most important aspect of Solomon's text on Noland is the way it relates to his discussion of Rauschenberg, which follows immediately after. At a glance, the passages dealing with Rauschenberg appear to have striking similarities with Solomon's discussion of Noland: there is an emphasis on ambiguity, optimism, and the apolitical nature of the works. Yet there is an added element in the

text devoted to Rauschenberg: the notion of a new sensibility, which would ultimately separate Rauschenberg's work from the characteristics shared with Noland's "new classicism." To understand the meaning of this "new sensibility", along with its implications not only in the art world but among intellectuals and policy-makers as well, it is necessary to examine its relationship to Rauschenberg's work and, more broadly, the shifting perception of society and culture under the Kennedy Administration.

At the outset, Solomon emphasizes that Rauschenberg represents a new approach to art, simply by virtue of the fact that he abandons pure abstraction, incorporating figurative imagery into his painting-collages, or "combines", as he calls them: thus, Rauschenberg is "setting aside traditional values regarding subject matter". This is a "new" development, at least in relation to the previous decade, where abstraction dominated. In a rather indirect fashion, Solomon implies that abstraction, and by association, Greenberg, are part of the traditional establishment, no longer responsive to aesthetic innovation. This point he makes abundantly clear when he speaks of Rauschenberg's aesthetic in relation to the Post-Painterly Abstractionists:

None of the abstract painters altered traditional attitudes toward materials or procedures in any substantial way, but Rauschenberg led a revolution which has rejected wholly the idea that one kind of materials [sic] or another are more or less appropriate to art. 42

The time is ripe, it seems, to cast off the weight of tradition, even if it is as recent as the previous decade, but the introduction of actual objects and junk sculpture is hardly a "new" approach in art,

since over forty years of collage history preceded Rauschenberg's "breakthrough." How then, is this innovation particularly "revolutionary"? It would seem that while Solomon indicates the "revolution" stems from formal concerns, there is an element in Rauschenberg's work which specifically differentiates him not only from the abstractionists, but from the Dadaists preceding him:

[Rauschenberg has a] positive and constructive view of the world. He has no interest in social comment or satire, or in politics; he uses his previously inappropriate materials not out of a desire to shock, but out of sheer delight, out of an optimistic belief that richness and heightened meaning can be found anywhere in the world, even in the refuse found in the street. 43

According to Solomon, the basis of the "revolution" is, ironically, apolitical and positive. While this particular kind of revolution is a novel, if not innovative, concept, Rauschenberg's combine-paintings were not always described in such absolutely affirmative terms; earlier reviews of Rauschenberg's work frequently spoke of the negative tone underlying his combines as in the case of Bed (figure 3) which was likened to the scene of a messy murder. In less graphic terms, figurative artist Fairfield Porter interpreted the "general

grubbiness" of Rauschenberg's combines:

He [Rauschenberg] expresses the morality of poverty, inducing a monastic respect for things that no one values. He protests the waste in this society where we take it for granted that automobiles are disposable, and that trash cans are filled with paper work. He calls attention to the success of industrialism opposite to the way the Bauhaus did, which saw industrialism as it wished to be seen. 44

Porter's view is one that credits Rauschenberg with a certain kind of moral view, one which ostensibly exposes industrialism for what it is and which deplores waste and conspicuous consumption in American society. However, what is most interesting in Porter's review, along with others acknowledging a somewhat negative aspect in Rauschenberg's work, is the consistent observation that the combines are not especially critical. Porter notes that "Rauschenberg's work has more personality than anything like it. Its weakness is that it tends to be chic."⁴⁵ In a similar vein, critic Irving Sandler likened the Neo-Dada aesthetic to that of the Ash Can School, the realist painters who refused to sacrifice "truth" to "beauty," yet he qualified the critical position implied by the label "Neo-Dada":

...unlike the Dadas who carried on an organized insulting of modern civilization...the Neo-Dadas are accepting of their condition and are primarily interested in expressing a heightened sensitivity to it. 46

There is something of a paradox here; the critics (with the exception of Solomon) recognize the possibility of protest directed at society, generally on the basis of the cast-off materials used, but they also

concede that, regardless of the suggestion of critique, the work ultimately retains a neutrality, even a "chicness", which outweighs its potentially critical qualities.⁴⁷ The way in which Solomon transforms this paradox into a thoroughly positive exercise in "sheer delight" is accomplished through the concept of ambiguity, which is not simply imposed on the work, but applied in conjunction with the images themselves.

Consider Solomon's statement regarding Rauschenberg's work:

Since his paintings are never anecdotal or narrative in any sense, the agglomeration of images and objects has the sole function of generating a kind of irresolute tension with respect to the meaning of the relationship between the images...Rauschenberg keeps the attention of the beholder by offering constantly vacillating alternative meanings, so that we can never arrive at a precise and resolved meaning for the painting. 48

While Solomon claims no precise meaning is possible, he does not tell us there is no meaning there. The meaning of the work becomes the multiplicity and ambiguity of which Solomon speaks, imprecise and irresolute. The juxtapositions of disparate images and objects generates ambiguity, since there is no narrative sequence which logically follows from them, and from this, the viewer arrives at a "meaning" which is in itself indeterminate. An important aspect of this analysis hinges on the viewer's willingness to suspend the possibility of narrative in the works so that the relationships between objects and images are vague and, at their most specific, simply suggestive. In so doing, associations called up by each specific image diminish in relation to the ambiguity which is evoked

through the interaction between images. The ambiguity does not obliterate the associative value of each image--rather, it preys on this, using it to evoke equivocality.⁴⁹ Thus, the inclusion of an eagle, an astronaut, the Statue of Liberty in the photo-silkscreen Tree Frog (1964, fig. 5) have particular meanings in and of themselves--but their relationship to other images, less "loaded" symbolically, such as a sailboat, a car, a figure in a crowd, a hard-hat worker on a construction site--obscures their own constitutive value as meanings; their

presence is tamed, put at a distance, made almost transparent; it recedes a little, it becomes the accomplice of a concept which comes to it fully armed: once made use of, it becomes artificial. 50

The "presence," the individual meanings comprising each image of the overall composition become "accomplices" to a greater concept--ambiguity. To attempt to connect the images with a narrative would destroy their function as forms in which ambiguity can be generated; this is the essential point Solomon makes when he speaks of their "sole function of generating a kind of irresolute tension" in the relationship between images.⁵¹ Yet this unresolved tension, this ambiguous meaning is not an objective, value-free concept. The images and their collective expression, however indeterminate, connote a "sign" which is not only dependent on the dynamic between the two, but also by their historical significance and specificity. It is this sign, or second level of meaning, which (to use Solomon's terms) is designated the "new sensibility." Rauschenberg's work forms the visual expression of this new sensibility, but what that

concept represented, and why Rauschenberg's work was particularly suited for it in 1964 will be the subject of the following discussion.

In contrast to the ambiguity evoked by Noland's work, Rauschenberg's particular brand of equivocality is dependent on the inclusion of identifiable images. While it may seem somewhat paradoxical that objects and images drawn from popular culture were as, if not more, indeterminate than abstraction, this particular state of affairs was related to a changing concept of modernism, not simply in relation to Clement Greenberg's ever-weakening grip on art discourse, but also to a shift in perception regarding the purposes of art. In her 1965 essay "One Culture and the New Sensibility," Susan Sontag, leftist intellectual and critic, discusses this change as a response to various aspects of modern society:

What we are getting is not the demise of art, but a transformation of the function of art. Art, which arose in human society as a magical-religious operation, and passed over into a technique for depicting and commenting on secular reality, has in our own time arrogated to itself a new function... Art today is a new kind of instrument, an instrument for modifying consciousness and organizing new modes of sensibility. 52

This "expansion of sensibilities" is made possible through the incorporation of materials which were, as Solomon would say, "previously inappropriate" to art expression. Sontag welcomes this change, claiming that a critical position in art smacks of a dead, moralizing tradition and must give way to an aesthetic which forms a

bridge between the world and art:

The Matthew Arnold notion of culture defines art as the criticism of life--this being understood as the propounding of moral, social, and political ideas. The new sensibility understands art as an extension of life--this being understood as the representation of (new) modes of vivacity...A great work of art is never simply (or even mainly) a vehicle of ideas or moral sentiments. It is, first of all, an object modifying our consciousness and sensibility...53

Sontag is advocating a fusion of "spheres," so to speak, where art becomes an integral, positive component of society rather than a removed, critical element (ostensibly "severed" from life). There is no room in this new vision of art for elitist theories of aesthetics which keep the world at bay; by expanding its function to develop sensibilities hitherto untouched, art will connect and link to experience, even if this be a vague, undefined process.

If these "new modes of vivacity" seem all too abstract in Sontag's account, the images and materials drawn from society which Rauschenberg incorporates in his work make this new sensibility a little more down to earth. Alan Solomon explains how Rauschenberg's own "philosophical" approach transforms the abstract into a more tangible reality:

[Rauschenberg] expresses the whole point of view of the movement for which he is the point of departure: 'Painting relates to both art and life. Neither can be made. I try to act in that gap between the two.' In other words, the conditions he brings to his art are identical with the conditions he finds in the real world; meaning and value are inherent in both, we need only seek them out. 54

Solomon's interpretation of Rauschenberg's words comes close to the position espoused by Sontag: Rauschenberg bridges two disparate worlds, art and life. As a result of this union, experience and art coexist in happy harmony--no "Matthew Arnold notion of culture" interferes.

The bridge between art and life is no more literally illustrated than in Rauschenberg's Winter Pool (1959, fig. 6) where two painted canvases are joined by a real ladder. The right panel is primarily patches of paint, roughly applied, while the left panel includes actual picture frames and other "worldly" materials. Nailed to the ladder, the canvases are literally joined to the "world" (or its material "representative") and all elements are placed on the same plane. A similar theme found its expression in Rauschenberg's Tracer (1964, fig. 7); an icon of high art, Rubens' Toilet of Venus, is placed on a par with images of street scenes, army helicopters, caged birds and an American eagle. Each image is treated with the same level of indifference--Rubens and hard hat workers co-exist side by side as equals, reproduced by the same technological process. Even the process itself breaks down the barriers between art and life, for Rauschenberg's silkscreening technique approximate that used in advertising. It is one more area in which Rauschenberg "expands sensibilities" in a positive way, as Max Kozloff explains:

...his statement is not unfriendly toward our technological packaging of sensations, but rather welcomes the inherent possibilities of the mass media [...] Each of these tableaux is part of a continuing badinage between the assertion of paint and the continuing claims of the outside world, now carried on through the mediation of reproductive processes. 55

Tapping into technological developments and mass media, Rauschenberg ostensibly unleashes a range of possibilities whereby the very processes or forms of his work become as accessible as the images themselves. Sontag elaborates on the implications of this "democratization":

One important consequence of the new sensibility (with its abandonment of the Matthew Arnold notion of culture)...[is] that the distinction between 'high' and 'low' culture seems less and less meaningful. For such a distinction--inseparable from the Matthew Arnold apparatus--simply does not make sense for a creative community of artists and scientists engaged in programming sensations, uninterested in art as a species of moral journalism.⁵⁶

As cultural distinctions between "high" and "low" become increasingly obscured, art would be, in theory, more accessible for all. The possibilities resulting from this development is articulated most aptly by Sontag:

If art is understood as a form of discipline of the feelings and a programming of sensations then the feeling (or sensation) given off by a Rauschenberg painting might be like that of a song by the Supremes. ⁵⁷

While few disagreed with Sontag's assessment of the situation, not everyone anticipated be-bopping to "Baby Love" or a Rauschenberg combine with quite the same enthusiasm as she.

While Sontag's vision of the egalitarian age of culture may have had an admirable anti-elitist, democratic appeal, her optimistic

conception of the future did not enjoy universal consensus. Those who were critical of the new sensibility were not convinced that the new Renaissance was at hand; indeed, they argued that the integration of high and low culture would not elevate, but rather would level all culture. The debate had as its starting point varying views on the effects of mass culture. In contrast to the populist position adopted by Sontag, leftist Dwight Macdonald expressed his concerns with posed by mass culture in his 1961 essay "Masscult and Midcult":

...Masscult is a dynamic, revolutionary force, breaking down the old barriers of class, tradition, and taste, dissolving all cultural distinctions. It mixes, scrambles everything together, producing what might be called homogenized culture ...[but] whereas the cream is still in the homogenized milk, somehow it disappears from homogenized culture. For the process destroys all values, since value-judgements require discrimination, an ugly word in liberal-democratic America. Masscult is very, very democratic; it refuses to discriminate against or between anything or anybody. All is grist for its mill and all comes out finely ground indeed. 58

What is perhaps most interesting in Macdonald's observations is that the characteristics of "masscult" do not differ markedly from Sontag's conception of culture, where Motown hits and Rauschenberg combines existed side by side. Macdonald identifies the egalitarian aspect of mass culture, its non-discriminating character, its ability to eliminate class distinctions. The point of contention between Sontag and Macdonald lies in their respective views of the effects of "democratization." Macdonald points to the fact that the resultant shift is merely quantitative (more cultural options are available if discriminating standards are eliminated) rather than qualitative.

The situation does not promise to raise overall standards, as Sontag hoped, but precludes the possibility of such an occurrence, as Herbert Marcuse explained:

The range of choice open to the individual is not the decisive factor in determining the degree of human freedom, but what can be chosen and what is chosen by the individual...Free choice among a wide variety of goods and services does not signify freedom if these goods and services sustain social controls over a life of toil and fear--that is, if they sustain alienation. And the spontaneous reproduction of superimposed needs by the individual does not establish autonomy; it only testifies to the efficacy of these controls. 59

His words articulate the fundamental concept informing a critical perspective on mass culture: industrialization creates a demand for culture--a demand which increases as leisure time becomes more available--but satiates this demand with a culture, mass culture, which entertains and distracts from the real conditions of society, those which initially induced the desire for release from it. 60

Marcuse and Macdonald, along with other critics of mass culture and the "new sensibility", necessarily based their critique on the belief that a genuine culture of the people could not be attained under the existing structure of capitalism, which by its very nature was alienating. This alienation had been assimilated in the previous decade as an emblem of freedom and individuality. 61 But as Alan Solomon had pointed out in the introduction of the Biennale catalogue, a new generation had matured beyond the angst of the previous decades, signaling the beginning of the "post-Freudian age." Alienation was on the outs, and a new age was taking its place, as

conservative sociologist Edward Shils explained:

This new order of society ["mass society"], despite all its internal conflicts, discloses in the individual a greater sense of attachment to the society as a whole, and of affinity with his fellows...The new society is a mass society precisely in the sense that the mass population has become incorporated into society. The center of society--the central institutions, and the central value systems which guide and legitimate these institutions--has extended its boundaries. Most of the population (the "mass") now stands in a closer relationship to the center than has been the case in either premodern societies or in the earlier phases of modern society. 62

There was no need to talk of alienation produced by society when in fact the individuals within it were increasingly integrated through their "greater sense of attachment." These individuals converge to form a mass society which has as its focus a vital center of shared values and institutions. Whereas critics of mass culture claimed that mass society destroyed the individual,⁶³ the optimistic sociologist argued that mass society enriched the individual's potential:

Mass society has aroused and enhanced individuality. Individuality is characterized by an openness to experience, an efflorescence of sensation and sensibility...[it] has liberated the cognitive, appreciative and moral capacities of individuals. Larger elements of the population have consciously learned to value the pleasures of eye, ear, taste, touch, and conviviality. People make choices more freely in many spheres of life, and these choices are not necessarily made for them by tradition, authority, or scarcity. 64

The limitations of choice are cast aside in favor of the greater

good--the development of the individual. While Marcuse argued that these choices were illusory since they sustained alienation, Shils argued that alienation no longer was an issue. Mass society paradoxically produced greater individuality. Sociologist, Clyde Kluckhohn, echoing Shils' view, explained:

Today's kind of 'conformity' may actually be step toward more genuine individuality in the United States. 'Conformity' is less of a personal and psychological problem--less tinged with anxiety and guilt...If one accepts outwardly the conventions of one's group, one may have greater psychic energy to develop and fulfill one's private potentialities as a unique person.⁶⁵

If fulfillment could only come through individual potential, and this in turn depended on the individual's abilities to assimilate with society, certainly the greater range of opportunities in mass culture would only serve to enhance the possibilities for individuality. Was this not what Sontag had advocated in her plea for "expanding sensibilities"? There was no need for an oppositional culture when fulfillment was just around the corner.

This interpretation was bolstered by the contention of many intellectuals that society was in fact better than ever before. The cultural optimism expressed by leftists such as Sontag and conservatives like Shils found its political counterpart in the end of ideology--an intellectual discourse which was so labeled after Daniel Bell's book of the same name.⁶⁶ Bell cited the fact that intellectuals were in agreement, for the most part, on political issues--notably that political pluralism and the welfare state proved to be the most viable means with which to improve society, after the hard-learned lessons of Stalinism had proved that political extremism

of any kind resulted in totalitarianism. The situation, as Bell saw it, was that

to old politico-economic radicalism (preoccupied with such matters as the socialization of industry) has lost its meaning, while the stultifying aspects of contemporary culture (e.g., television) cannot be redressed in political terms. At the same time, American culture has almost completely accepted the avant-garde, particularly in art, and the older academic styles have been driven out completely. The irony, further, for those who seek 'causes' is that the workers, whose grievances were once the driving energy for social change, are more satisfied with society than the intellectuals. The workers have not achieved utopia, but their expectations were less than those of the intellectuals, and the gains correspondingly larger. 67

Critical intellectuals such as Marcuse and Macdonald appeared to be the only disgruntled members of society, despite the improvements made within the system; indeed, Bell implies that their critique is redundant in a society which has become so progressive that it even accepts the avant-garde. For Macdonald, this latter feature was hardly reassuring; in accepting the avant-garde, society developed a new "twist" to mass culture: "midcult."

In Masscult the trick is plain--to please the crowd by any means. But Midcult has it both ways: it pretends to respect the standards of High Culture while in fact it vulgarizes them...It is its ambiguity that makes Midcult alarming. For it presents itself as a part of High Culture. Not that coterie stuff, not those snobbish inbred so-called intellectuals who are only talking to themselves. Rather the great vital mainstream, wide and clear though perhaps not so deep. 68

But the ambiguity which Macdonald finds so alarming was, of course,

the place in which cultural gains could be made, according to the proponents of the new sensibility. Perhaps the expanding sensibilities would not produce a cultural utopia, but by modifying expectations, the gains could be "correspondingly larger"... What is good for the worker can be good for the intellectual.

For those intellectuals who adopted this pragmatic position, Kennedy's progressive image confirmed that the welfare state could redress the problems of society with a bit of fine-tuning. A rational, realistic approach was therefore much more appropriate than the romantic utopian revolution--intellectual disillusionment was replaced by confident optimism as the promise of liberalism became a reality. The views of Cold War liberals and leftists advocating liberalism in the name of populist values converged with the possibility of a new and better society under the new liberalism espoused by Kennedy. Seymour Martin Lipset, an advocate of Bell's "end of ideology" position, articulated this view when he wrote

...democracy is not only or even primarily a means through which different groups can attain their ends or seek the good society, it is the good society itself... 69

The ideological struggles between the Left and the Right gave birth to liberal politics in the 50s, but by the 60s, these politics had matured with the Kennedy promise; liberals no longer had to fight for the good society--they had won the battle, caught up in the spirit of the New Frontier. To paraphrase Macdonald, the vital center was the vital mainstream, wider than ever before.

Just as the welfare state promised more to members of society,

the new sensibility in culture promised the greatest benefits, equitably distributed among the greatest number. Culture could prove society with a wider range of sensibilities and sensations by abdicating its oppositional position; like the intellectuals, it could operate most effectively in concert with a system which had proven itself to be the best. The end of ideology signaled the institutionalization of liberalism; and as culture came under its wing, it too was liberalized in the name of democracy and anti-elitism. The cultural spokesman for the New Frontier, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., clarified the implications:

...the greatest art is great because it interprets simple and complex experience simultaneously and can thus appeal to people at many levels. 70

While it was fairly clear what Rauschenberg represented to America, the task remained to convince the rest of the world that the Americans' new sensibility was indeed the greatest.

NOTES

1

Lois Bingham, memo to For the Record, April 7, 1964, Venice Biennale files.

2

These works, and those discussed throughout the text, were featured in the 1964 exhibition in Venice. It should be noted here that of the "Four Germinal Painters," this discussion will focus on Rauschenberg and Noland; Noland was the only abstractionist eligible for the prize since the award went to a living artist. Rauschenberg was designated by the American organizers as the most likely contender, even over Johns, perhaps because of his higher profile internationally (having had two shows in London and two shows in Paris within a year of the Biennale). As for Johns, it is possible that he was considered too much of a painter, for much of the text devoted to Rauschenberg salutes his abilities to bridge the division between sculpture and painting, and holds this up as an innovation with more far-reaching implications than any developments by the other "germinal painters."

3

"Trend to the 'Anti-Art'," Newsweek 51 (March 31, 1958), p. 94.

4

Alan R. Solomon, XXXII International Biennial Exhibition of Art, Venice, 1964, United States of America, "Introduction", (hereafter referred to as the Venice Biennale catalogue). The catalogue is unpaginated but divided into sections which I will indicate for convenience.

5

Ibid., "Kenneth Noland."

6

Ibid.

7

Ibid., "Introduction."

8

It is interesting to note that Solomon omitted extensive discussion of Rauschenberg's links with European artists in the Biennale catalogue, contrary to the catalogue he wrote on Rauschenberg for the Jewish Museum in 1963. In the earlier text, Solomon elaborated on specific similarities between Picasso and Rauschenberg: ambiguity, juxtapositions of objects, contrasts of texture and color, and so on. In the Biennale catalogue, these qualities are attributed to Rauschenberg alone. See Alan R. Solomon, Robert Rauschenberg, (New York: The Jewish Museum, 1963), n.p.

9

Venice Biennale catalogue, "Introduction."

10

Ibid., "Kenneth Noland."

11

For a discussion of the development of this aesthetic, especially as it pertains to Rauschenberg and Johns, see Moira Roth, "The Aesthetic of Indifference," Artforum 16 (November 1977), pp. 47-53.

12

Indeed, the works chosen for the exhibition in Venice were the most "restrained" paintings by Noland; other works, such as Lunar Episode (1959) or Round (1963), which showed evidence of a more painterly technique were not included.

13

Clement Greenberg, "Louis and Noland," Art International (May 1960), p. 29. Greenberg tentatively included Sam Francis with Noland and Louis, although he qualified this: "right now I am not half so sure about him [Francis] as I am about the other two." (p. 29).

14

For an elaboration on this view, see Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," Arts Yearbook 4 (1961), pp. 102-108, passim.

15

"Louis and Noland," p. 28.

16

Clement Greenberg, "After Abstract Expressionism," Art International 7 (October 1962), pp. 29-31.

17

Clement Greenberg, "Three New American Painters," Canadian Art 20 (May/June 1963), p. 175.

18

"After Abstract Expressionism," p. 29.

19

"Modernist Painting," p. 103.

20

Noland, quoted in Color (UCLA Galleries Exhibition catalogue, Los Angeles, 1970, pp. 28-29), quoted by Kenworth Moffett, Kenneth Noland, (New York: Abrams, 1977), p. 50.

21

Noland, quoted by Philip Leider, "The Thing in Painting is Color," The New York Times, (August 25, 1968), pp. 21-22.

22

See for example, L.C. [Lawrence Campbell], "Kenneth Noland," Art News 61 (May 1962), p. 10 and J.S. [James Schuyler], "Kenneth Noland," Art News 55 (February 1957), p. 10. These two reviews are particularly interesting because they use Greenberg to validate

Noland's work; Campbell mentions that Noland was chosen by Greenberg as the most important young artist in contemporary art while "J.S." mentions that Noland was selected by Greenberg in Kootz's "Emerging Talent" show in 1954. In both cases, Greenberg's influence as a critic is used to establish the importance of the artist.

23

See for example Hilton Kramer, "A Critic on the Side of History: Notes on Clement Greenberg," Arts Magazine 37 (October 1962), pp. 60-63 and Jack Kroll, "Some Greenberg Circles," Art News 61 (March 1962), p. 35+. Both articles review Greenberg's Art and Culture, a collection of his essays published in book form; it is somewhat ironic that these essays, once consolidated in a single book lost much of their "resiliency," taking on an imposing permanence which made many critics uncomfortable.

24

Priscilla Colt, "Book Reviews: Clement Greenberg, Art and Culture: Critical Essays, College Art Journal 22 (Winter 1962), p. 122.

25

Greenberg saw Johns's work as somewhat more interesting because "the abiding interest of his art, as distinguished from its journalistic one, lies largely in the area of the formal or plastic." See his discussion of Johns in "After Abstract Expressionism," pp. 25-26.

26

Ibid., p. 32.

27

Max Kozloff, "Letter to the Editor," Art International 7 (June 1963), p. 88. The lengthy critique which follows indicts Greenberg on theoretical issues (his "system" of criticism) as well as his omissions of particular artists and movements, particularly Neo-Dada.

28

Donald Judd and Vivien Raynor, "In the Galleries," Arts Magazine 37 (September 1963), pp. 53-54.

29

To quote Greenberg: "...the unique and proper area of competence in each art coincided with all that was unique in the nature of its medium. The task of self-criticism became to eliminate from the specific effects of each art any and every effect that might conceivably be borrowed from or by the medium of any other art." ("Modernist Painting," p. 103).

30

Judd raised this issue in an earlier review of Noland's work: "Noland is one of the best, but not the best, nor is he the leader of the best group. The idea of successive waves, each a type, is fallacious." D.J. [Donald Judd], "Kenneth Noland," Arts Magazine 36 (September 1962), p. 53.

31
In more general terms, this debate was to have a far-reaching impact on the relationship between popular culture and high art, something which will be discussed in more detail when Robert Rauschenberg's critical fortunes are examined.

32
Venice Biennale Catalogue, "Kenneth Noland."

33
Ibid.

34
Ibid.

35
Ibid.

36
Ibid.

37
Ibid.

38
Ibid.

39
Ibid.

40
Ibid.

41
Ibid.

42
Ibid., "Robert Rauschenberg."

43
Ibid.

44
Fairfield Porter, "Art," The Nation 190 (April 23, 1960), p. 372. In a similar vein, critic Robert Coates noted that the Neo-Dada artists produced work which protested "everything from inflation to credit cards and fat-catism..." (See Robert M. Coates, "The 'Beat' Beat in Art," The New Yorker 35 (January 2, 1960), p. 60). See also Max Kozloff, "Art," The Nation 197 (December 7, 1963), p. 403 for his comments on the iconography in Rauschenberg's work.

45
Porter, p. 372.

46

Irving Herschel Sandler, "Ash Can Revisited, A New York Letter," Art International 4 (October 1960), pp. 28-9.

47

It is interesting to note a consensus on this point whether the critic saw it in favorable terms or not. Thus, while Sandler's (positive) review suggests that the ugliness of the work evokes "tragic" and "poignant" feelings (ibid.), the conservative Sidney Tillim abhors the "conventions of protest" in Rauschenberg's work, but adds "He is suspect because...[he] plays to the same jaded audience that now appreciates the novelty of the virtual filth and predictable insanity of his objects." (See S.T. [Sidney Tillim], "Robert Rauschenberg," Arts Magazine 34 (May 1960), p. 58). Despite Tillim's outraged tone, he identifies the popular appeal of the images of "virtual filth." While Tillim despairs over the fact that the audience has become enchanted with such filthy things, and perhaps worries that protest has become too popular for safety, Porter is concerned that the elements which make Rauschenberg's work interesting come too close in fulfilling a fashionable taste. In both cases, the concerns stem from the dialectic between the "protest" element and the popular appeal in the work.

48

Venice Biennale catalogue, "Robert Rauschenberg."

49

Much of this analysis is based on Roland Barthes' discussion of the way ideology is conveyed through images. See "Myth Today" in his Mythologies (trans. Annette Lavers), (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), pp. 109-159.

50

Ibid., p. 118.

51

A similar point can be made in relation to Solomon's comments on the actual forms--i.e., junk, refuse and so on--which Rauschenberg uses. By separating them from an implied critique of waste and ugliness in society, the works are simply evocative in form of "the richness and heightened meaning" to be found in the world.

52

Susan Sontag, Against Interpretation, "One Culture and the New Sensibility," (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1966), p. 296.

53

Ibid., pp. 299-300.

54

Venice Biennale catalogue, "Robert Rauschenberg."

55

Kozloff, "Art", p. 402.

56
Sontag, p. 302. It is curious that Sontag speaks so optimistically of this new sensibility where sensations are "programmed." The term evokes overtones of an increasingly mechanized and controlled society, where even emotional responses have a "planned" quality to them. Hardly cause for celebration.

57
Ibid., p. 303.

58
Dwight Macdonald, Against the American Grain, "Masscult and Midcult," (New York: Vintage, 1965), p. 12.

59
Herbert Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), pp. 7-8.

60
T.W. Adorno expresses this contradiction most lucidly: "Distraction is bound to the present mode of production, to the rationalized and mechanized process of labor to which...the masses are subject...People want to have fun. A fully concentrated and conscious experience of art is possible only to those whose lives do not put such a strain on them that in their spare time they want relief from both boredom and effort simultaneously. The whole sphere of cheap commercial entertainment reflects this dual desire." ("Popular Music," quoted by Macdonald, p. 5).

61
Guilbaut, pp. 158-9.

62
Edward Shils, "Mass Society and Its Culture," Daedalus 89 (Spring 1960), p. 288.

63
See for example, Macdonald, p. 11.

64
Shils, p. 290.

65
Clyde Kluckhohn, quoted by Seymour Martin Lipset, "A Changing American Character?" p. 171, in Culture and Social Character: The Work of David Riesman Reviewed, eds. Seymour Martin Lipset and Leo Lowenthal, (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1961). It is interesting to note that the collection of essays reviews the implications of David Riesman's The Lonely Crowd, which studied the tendencies to conform in society, as a result of alienation produced by it. Many of the essays disagree with his proposal and Riesman himself suggests that his critique was probably "too harsh." See his essay in the anthology, "The Lonely Crowd: A Reconsideration in 1960," pp. 419-58.

66

Daniel Bell, The End of Ideology, (New York: Colliers, 1961).

67

Daniel Bell, "The End of Ideology in the West," p. 101, in The End of Ideology Debate, ed. Chaim Waxman, (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1968).

68

Macdonald, p. 37.

69

Seymour Martin Lipset, "The End of Ideology?," p. 69, in Waxman.

70

Schlesinger, in Congressional Record, p. 15137.

CHAPTER 3

The 1964 Biennale: Prize-Winning Machinations

Within the first week of the 32nd Venice Biennale's opening, the press began issuing its verdict over the Rauschenberg prize: the conservative Le Figaro decried the Pop artist's victory, charging that an "apocalyptic atmosphere" had taken over the Giardini.¹ The leftist French newspaper Combat denounced the "treason in Venice" and called for a boycott of the Biennale.² Italy's ABC headlined "Everything is Lost, Even a Sense of Shame."³ For all of its ambiguity, Rauschenberg's work seemed to have made quite a clear statement; if there were any lingering doubts, Alan Solomon had obligingly clarified the situation the week before Rauschenberg's prize was awarded: "The whole world recognizes that the world art center has moved from Paris to New York."⁴ What seemed to be an obvious fact to the U.S. commissioner took on a somewhat different appearance for those who objected to the U.S. prize: one French critic responded "The whole world? Our entire little world is excited by this declaration of war. All we talked about was the Americans' demands."⁵ For critics of the U.S. exhibition, Solomon's comment was only one more example of the Americans' cultural imperialism which had dominated the Biennale from the beginning.

At issue from the start was the annex to the U.S. exhibition. The French press, almost without exception, made mention of the unprecedented annex; while the other countries had to contend with

the limited space of their pavilions,

The Americans, in 1964, have invaded with a completely missionary zeal. Not content to exhibit in their pavilion in the Biennale gardens, they have organized a gigantic retrospective of their two stars, Johns and Rauschenberg--plus their accomplices--in the palace of the old U.S. consulate. 6

The France Observateur complained that the Americans had infringed on "the elementary rules of 'fair play'" by extending their exhibit beyond the Giardini grounds. 7 Other reports described the situation in much stronger terms, such as those used by Pierre Cabanne in Arts:

[Solomon and his associates] have treated us as poor backward Negroes, good only for colonization. The first commando is in place: it's called 'Pop Art.' The invasion does not take place in the official pavilion; it takes place at a distance, choosing expansionism instead. The old American consulate... is transformed into a temple for the new religion. The pope officiates there: Rauschenberg, surrounded by his great priests, Johns, Oldenburg, Dine and Stella. 8

Even the French critic who was most favorable to the Americans, Pierre Restany, stood in opposition to the expansiveness of the U.S. exhibit; speaking of the additional space and the artists featured there, Restany commented:

[I] have the greatest esteem for these artists... but I vigorously contest the validity of the proceedings which created an unfortunate precedent and contributed to arousing a halo of cultural imperialism around the Americans. 9

For those less inclined to give the Americans the benefit of the doubt, the Americans benefitted from unfair advantages over every

other country participating in the event. Their large exhibition was already an affront, but the fact that an artist exhibiting off the grounds was awarded the major prize was an outrage.

The reaction to the American victory was compounded by the way in which Rauschenberg's work became "eligible" for the prize: the president of the jury, A. Hammacher (representing the Netherlands), had threatened to resign if the prize was given to Rauschenberg on the basis of his one work exhibited on the official Biennale grounds.¹⁰ A compromise was finally reached, where the Americans agreed to move three Rauschenberg works to their official pavilion; this was done in the morning, and Rauschenberg's prize was announced that afternoon. A photographer captured the transfer of Rauschenberg's works on film, and the picture sent shock waves throughout the Giardini (figure 8); it was widely reproduced as proof that the Americans had secretly moved the paintings in an underhanded maneuver¹¹ to capture the prize. Whether the jury had agreed beforehand made little difference--if anything, it only aggravated the situation, making the Americans appear as though they had made secret arrangements with the jury. Within the single image, a multitude of meanings appeared, none too ambiguous for the French: the U.S. had employed unfair cultural tactics, were accorded unprecedented favors, and managed to come away with the Grand Prize by sneaking paintings back onto the Giardini grounds.

These were the circumstances which surrounded the events in Venice--but what of the actual jury deliberations? The international jury, ostensibly objective, pooled from the various nominations submitted by each participating country, had selected Rauschenberg

from all the artists at the Biennale. Was this not evidence of the superiority of Rauschenberg's work? Like everything else at the Biennale that year, the situation was not as clear-cut as it appeared. After intensive lobbying, Alan Solomon was able to convince the Biennale President to appoint an American juror,¹² the first time a representative from the United States served on the international jury. The American organizers had some difficulty locating someone willing to take the job; James Johnson Sweeney and Walter Hopps had both declined the invitation.¹³ In the end, Sam Hunter, then chairman of the art department at Brandeis University,¹⁴ agreed to represent the Americans. In Venice, Rauschenberg's dealer, Leo Castelli commented "At least we have an American judge now. That's one thing in our favor."¹⁵ But it was not immediately clear whether Hunter was an asset or a liability to the Americans' cause: prior to the jury's deliberations, Hunter spoke on Italian television, proclaiming the superiority of American art,¹⁶ an incident which more or less destroyed any illusions about the objectivity of the American juror. Solomon later noted, "When Hunter arrived he was impossible about proving his purity, to the point where the Italian jurors wondered if he wanted the prize to go elsewhere,"¹⁷ that is, to someone other than Rauschenberg. While Hunter himself will not comment on the implications of Solomon's statement, the "purity" of which Solomon spoke may have simply been in regards to Hunter's indiscretion with the Italian press, but this is an issue which still remains unclear.¹⁸ As for the Italian jurors' comments, they were apparently concerned that Hunter's obvious bias would rule out the possibility of a Rauschenberg prize, since the jury might feel compelled to vote for another artists as

evidence of their objectivity. But the reasons for the Italians unequivocal support of Rauschenberg remain unclear. Franz Meyer, the Swiss member of the jury that year suggested that, according to the Italians, the Americans were threatening to withdraw from the Biennale:

I remember that the two Italian members, [Giuseppe] Marchiori and [Marco] Valsecchi, told us in the beginning, that they feared that the Americans wouldn't come anymore, if they still had no prize this time and we should for reasons of opportunity consider such a prize. As Italians Marchiori and Valsecchi were naturally primarily [sic] interested in the prestige of the Biennale and its continuation as an institution. 19

It is unclear whether the Americans had actually offered the Italians financial support for the Biennale. The French magazine La Cote de Peintres reported that the Biennale was criticized for its cost (over 200 million lire) and that the Americans had promised to absorb the deficit;²⁰ Le Figaro also mentioned that the Biennale was endangered financially,²¹ but this cannot be confirmed.²² Alan Solomon suggested that the Americans' chances for a prize "began with the simple pure fact that certain Italians wanted an American prize for general altruistic reasons, and proceeded to work for it,"²³ but it still remains unclear why they were so inclined.

Not all the members of the jury were in agreement with the choice of Rauschenberg, however. Rauschenberg had received the majority of the votes (four to three); those in favor included Hunter, Marchiori, Valsecchi and Julius Starzinski, the Polish judge.²⁴ Meyer, the Brazilian judge Murillo Mendes and the president of the jury, Hammacher, opposed Rauschenberg initially and the final

vote remains unclear . Recall that it was Hammacher who had threatened to resign if the prize was given to Rauschenberg on the basis of one work exhibited in the Giardini. Apparently, an offer had been made to give the award to Kenneth Noland, but Solomon announced that if Rauschenberg was disqualified, all the American artists would be withdrawn from the competition.²⁵ Meyer eventually supported Rauschenberg, as he later explained:

When Bob Rauschenberg's name came up (maybe proposed by one of the Italians, too), I remember that I tried for a moment to extend the discussions to other names of Americans (Mike Sonnabend reminded me years later, that I had told him I would rather have voted for Jasper Johns), but--I think that especially Sam Hunter made it clear to me--the only American of this generation, who...could eventually qualify for the chief-prize, was Bob Rauschenberg, much nearer to European sensibility than the other artists shown in the Consulate. I fully understood this consideration.²⁶

The issue of Rauschenberg's affinity with European sensibility will be discussed more thoroughly later. The task still remained to convince Hammacher to abide by the jury's decision. Prior to the compromise, reached with the transportation of Rauschenberg's work to the official pavilion, Rauschenberg's close friend, Merce Cunningham and his dance troupe performed at the Venice theatre, La Fenice. Rauschenberg was responsible for all the set designs, which consisted of Italian stagehands "moving about in the background, pushing brooms or carrying props."²⁷ The event was well attended, and Hammacher was²⁸ reportedly won over by the performance and Rauschenberg's sets. The following day he agreed to the compromise, and Rauschenberg emerged as the winner of the Grand Prize for painting.

While the transfer of Rauschenberg's work seemed to be the apex of the controversy, it was not the only event which provoked the critics of the Americans. For the French, who unanimously condemned the American tactics, the imperialistic statement made by Solomon (regarding the transfer of world art centers) found its visual counterpart in the advertisement which Leo Castelli, Rauschenberg's New York dealer, ran in the June issue of Art International and the July issue of L'Oeil (figure 9). On the opening pages of these journals appeared a map of Western Europe and England, showing the cities of London, Paris, Kassel and Venice. Flanking each city were names of various Castelli artists--Rauschenberg, Johns, Chamberlain, Stella, Bontecou, Leslie, Lichtenstein and Higgins. While seemingly innocent--after all, Castelli was only publicizing the fact that most of his artists were being shown in major international shows (Documenta, the Biennale) or in the major European art centers--the imagery he chose conveyed much more to the world in 1964 than mere publicity for his gallery. Paris L'Express reproduced the advertisement in its article on the U.S. domination of the Biennale, identifying it with the caption "Publicite Americaine" rather than specifying it as Castelli's own promotional project.²⁹ Indeed, Annette Michelson, in her favorable coverage of the Americans' role in Venice, conceded that the map was "somewhat Napoleonic."³⁰ When the Biennale prize ignited the volatile atmosphere pervading the Giardini, the advertisement articulated in visual terms the "crisis" as the French critics perceived it--Solomon directed the Americans' colonization of Europe, with the aid of his cartographer, Castelli, who mapped out the targets.

It is interesting that Castelli chose a map to represent his

artists and his gallery, for the image itself does not appear to be an advertisement at all and it takes some time before its commercial intent becomes apparent. A map is ostensibly an accurate and objective guide, providing direction or placement for things, whereas one might assume that an advertisement should clarify what is being sold and by whom as concisely and as immediately as possible. Yet in the Castelli ad, the map is not designed to reveal what is showing at Castelli's gallery in New York, but rather to demonstrate that the artists he sponsors are showing in Europe. Rauschenberg and Johns appear in all four cities, Chamberlain is in London and Venice, and so on. But rather than leaving the viewer with a sense that these artistic appearances were mere coincidences, the map specifies that these events were directed by Leo Castelli, as indicated by the imposing compass bearing his name. The compass is the only clue that the map has a commercial intent; Castelli's name and the address of his New York gallery encircle the "N" indicating north. If the gallery itself is not featured in the actual geography of the map, it is clear that it is exerting its influence by purporting to be as natural a guide as any Boy Scout compass indicating north, south, east or west.

From these more innocuous beginnings, more insidious connotations appear. The dotted lines which form the link between the names and cities suggest troop deployments or plans of attack. Yet in this case, the battle to be waged does not consist of infantry but rather of the "avant-garde"--the advanced guard, sent from New York to affect the cultural "liberation" of Western Europe. As these emissaries of American culture advance through Europe under the

guidance provided by the Castelli compass, all other geographical features become incidental, subsumed by the large, typeset names of the Castelli artists. indeed, the actual designations of the cities are included as small, incidental features, whereas the names "Rauschenberg", "Johns", "Lichtenstein", etc. dominate the land masses and essentially are there to designate the real significance of the various locations. Similarly, the borders of each country, while providing a sense of geography and direction within the map, have the additional function of actually forming visual links between the groups of artists' names. Again, the names provide direction and focus, whereas the borders themselves are simply visual transitions between artists' units. Only the compass, solid, black and imposing, distracts the viewer from this geographical harmony; but of course, it serves to direct the viewer back to the artists listed, while designating the source--Leo Castelli--for the identifying features of the map.

Further analysis leading to the same general sense of U.S. cultural domination can be discerned from what has been omitted from the map. The view of Western Europe is condensed, truncated. The bulk of Italy is eliminated, France and West Germany are shown only partially, and England is reduced to a fragment in the upper left hand corner. The names of the countries have been omitted--indeed, those few countries in which the names of Johns, Rauschenberg, et.al. are absent have been relegated to anonymity--and those nations "fortunate" enough to have been graced by Castelli's artists are identified only in those terms. Again, the essential information regarding the geography is based not on standard differentiation between nations, but rather on that which they have in common: the

presence of the Castelli artists. Details are unnecessary when the artists "say it all." What is presented, then, is not a Europe divided according to borders and national identities--instead, it is a unified Europe, one which significantly is unified geographically and visually by the presence of American artists who for the most part were associated with Pop Art. The implication that Europe could be dominated by artists aestheticizing the commercial, mass culture of the United States was anathema to the French especially, and the Castelli publicity took on even more significance after the Americans won the Biennale prize. While no critic specifically analyzed the image, the events of the Biennale clarified its implied meanings, to the point where it was obvious evidence of U.S. cultural tactics when it was reproduced in L'Express.

The issue of American cultural imperialism intensified when a French dealer, Daniel Cordier, closed his Paris gallery ten days after Rauschenberg received his prize in Venice; such an action would not have been of major consequence under normal circumstances, but before the Biennale opened, Cordier chose to issue and circulate widely a letter explaining his reasons for leaving Paris and moving to New York. He wrote,

The dimensions of this city are not compatible with the scale of modern civilization; it has become a holiday resort, a place of entertainment, and is becoming less and less a center of creative activity. In order to interpret our period, an artist has to be familiar with its realities, its sensibility. These can be felt better and more intensely in New York. 32

Paris, cultural center of the Western world, was deposed; Cordier's

words implied that it had the appeal of a vacation spot, without the impetus for creativity. New York, on the other hand, was the hub of modern civilization. As a dealer for Rauschenberg, Cordier had good reason to relocate in New York where modern sensibility and reality joined forces. Artists, it appeared, were not the only ones who could act in the gap between art and life. As an art market, New York had these advantages and more, as Cordier continued:

In America, there are curiosity, taste and means, which explains why New York, after having been a market, may well become a preponderant cultural center. 33

The pro-American press seized upon Cordier's "defection" as proof of the superiority of New York; Time used his letter as evidence that "Paris has slipped creatively" and the market had gravitated to New York because "first-rate moderns" are created there.³⁴ Art critic Robert Hughes noted that "French painting has lost its centrality" because of Paris's inability to adapt to aesthetic changes.³⁵ The viability of New York as a cultural center was measured relative to its economic strength; Paris was simply passé, its critics charged, deriving its importance from a tradition of culture which had no place in the active sensibility of modern civilization. Cordier had found his market and its center; the new sensibility had no place in Paris, and Cordier had the foresight to pack up his Rauschenberg's and move.

As noted earlier, the French response to the American victory was based largely on their perceptions of Solomon's handling of the show and the circumstances accumulating prior to the award. It was

also difficult for them to accept the major change at the Biennale--a young artist who was relatively unestablished had taken the major painting prize traditionally given to an "old master" of modern art. In 1964 the French had featured a major retrospective of the abstract painter, Roger Bissière; on the basis of awards made at the Biennale in previous years, Bissière seemed a likely contender for the prize. His reputation was long-standing as a major painter (he received the Grand Prix National des Arts in 1952, the first to be given to a painter) and his work was typical of the Paris school of abstract painting:

His painting has remained non-figurative but today we can see that its qualities are traditional and French: it is humble and intelligent, never dogmatic, harmoniously tuned to the simple emotions inspired by silent meditation before the spectacle of reality which is thereby freely and discreetly transcended. 36

These particular qualities were appropriate in an artist who was featured in the Biennale, as Raymond Cogniat explained in his summary of the French pavilion:

[Bissière] is certainly the painter most qualified to illustrate the peaceful permanence and continuing invention which one feels the need to experience even more vividly today. His exhibition is one of unquestionable dignity and refinement... 37

His work was championed by French critics for its fine technique and transcendental qualities which evoked an almost soothing effect;

Pierre Schneider described this in a review of Bissière's work in 1962:

Bissière practically never departs from the post-Cubist gridiron. He tends it with the loving care of a suburban gardener, extracting the maximum produce from each little plot. The general effect is that of a gentle, tightly woven Impressionistic patchwork: soft, quilted blankets for eyes prone to chills. 38

For those who had taken to bundling up in these protective, comforting aesthetics, Rauschenberg's Coke bottles came as something of a rude splash in the face.

Yet coke bottles were not all the French had to contend with; in Rauschenberg's silkscreens, for example, political and military issues appear repeatedly. In Kite (1963, figure 10) an American eagle is placed at the top of the canvas, linked to the images below by a shower of drips; below, a U.S. army helicopter dominates a crowd of flag-bearing American Marines, who appear to be storming an unidentified building. Rauschenberg's Buffalo (1964, figure 11) has similar allusions to American power: Kennedy, author of the "Grand Design" for Europe, gestures emphatically with an air of authority. At his side rests the omnipresent eagle, this time emblazoned with the Coca-Cola trademark. Signs of the New Frontier abound: the space program, represented by a lunar module "splashing down," the army helicopter, the city and of course the American symbol of power, the bald eagle.

These images, evoking military themes, would seem to be especially loaded for the French, particularly when one considers the political relations between France and the U.S. Recall that in

November of 1963, de Gaulle had announced his intention to pursue a policy calling for "l'Europe européenne," directly challenging American plans for a renewed "Atlantic Partnership." In defying the U.S., first through his rejection of Great Britain into the EEC, and second by refusing American offers for nuclear weaponry, truculently insisting on an independent nuclear defense, de Gaulle staked his claim for European hegemony. Yet in Venice, the Americans captured the cultural crown which France had worn for so long, and had done so with images which seemed intent on "bridging the gap" between art and power.

How were these images emptied of their associative values, as Solomon had argued, when power and authority seemed to exude from the canvases? How were these potential "imperialist aesthetics" perceived? Wasn't the bulk of the American exhibition predicated on its particularly "national" brand of culture, where icons of power were elevated to the realm of high art? And what of the traditional Western culture, which in Buffalo is scarcely visible as Rubens' Venus peers from under Kennedy's right arm? Amid the barrage of images, drawn from popular culture, Venus is almost lost. The fragmented hand gesture with its accusatory finger, points at her, as though expelling her from the modern world which surrounds her in various forms. She is out of focus, out of date amongst the technological images around her. As the cultural tradition of Europe faded beneath Rauschenberg's media images of American power, perhaps a new "grand design" for culture was revealed, where even high culture was subjected to American imperialism.

Unlike Solomon and American enthusiasts of Rauschenberg's work,

the French saw no ambiguity in his "new sensibility." In contrast to Bissiere's elegant abstractions, which gently transcended the issues of the outside world,

Pop Art is a brutal representation (characterized by giganticism) of elements from the American way of life, picked from the urban context. Consumer products have been worshiped in this civilization of comfort; it is therefore comprehensible, although sad, that food, cars, the American symbols of health and well-being, that is, all the germ-free and assembly line objects have become the major preoccupation of the North American artists. 39

Pop art brought one abruptly back into the "real world" of American consumer-culture. Pierre Schneider described the process as a shift from "hyper-idealism" to "hyper-materialism."⁴⁰ According to Solomon, the meanings of objects or images were transposed, once they were placed in the completely different context of a Rauschenberg combine--it was this which evoked a "new sensibility." But the signs of American popular culture refused to recede for the French critics--the sensibility represented one of materialism and consumerism.

The consumer oriented imagery was particularly objectionable given the relationship between Rauschenberg's work and that of the Dada group. While they disliked Rauschenberg's pop imagery, the "indifferent" tone of the work made it even more problematic. As Leonard, critic for the France Observateur explained,

For these usual objects, deformed, splattered, meticulously reconstructed in enormous dimensions, these 'comics' scrupulously reproduced on a scale of panoramic cinema screens, these collages of magazine photographs, all the bric-a-brac which consti-

tutes 'Pop Art'--it is this which constitutes a grotesque plagiarism of Dada...Dada was an essentially revolutionary movement, pushed by an immense social conviction. It was an attack on bourgeois society...but the Neo-Dadaists, by contrast, are locked in a passionate embrace with bourgeois symbols. 41

While Solomon had made a point of denying the potentially critical readings of Rauschenberg's work, the French critic found the work even more problematic because it remained detached, simply presenting objects without comment, reflecting the consumer society and worse, aestheticizing the process which "engenders publicity campaigns."⁴²

This observation presents an interesting contradiction with respect to the possible readings evoked by Rauschenberg's work. While they were potentially political works, aggrandizing U.S. power, given the political relations between France and the U.S., Leonard ignored these issues and chose to focus on the popular imagery employed in Rauschenberg's works, with its detached and almost apolitical tone. Again, examining Buffalo, it seems strange that Leonard, a critic violently opposed to the American "sensibility," would overlook the authoritarian gesture of Kennedy, and the symbols of American power. The critic offered a possible clue for this seemingly myopic reading of the work, however; identifying Rauschenberg's connections with the French Dada tradition, Leonard pointed out that the political nature of the works is debased, a "grotesque plagiarism." Political statements are renounced through the artist's embrace with mass culture--he makes no comment on Kennedy, he merely reproduces an image sapped of its meaning as it funnels through popular culture.

This issue was reiterated somewhat differently by Alain Bosquet, who voiced fears about a culture which has no "feeling," no

creativity--but simply imitates popular culture, creating a debased "high culture." The work of Rauschenberg and other Pop artists did not only signal the end of a fine art tradition, it threatened to level culture:

The Beatles and Johnny Hallyday have a more acceptable idea of improvisation than they [Rauschenberg and the Pop artists]. What is really serious is the number of run-of-the-mill people that applaud that kind of art. 43

One might assume that the Beatles and Johnny Hallyday at least had no pretensions about what they were doing, unlike Pop Art which professed to be the new avant-garde. Its superficial meaning hides behind the protective shield of the avant-garde, where it appears to be something it isn't:

...Pop Art is not really destructive: it is dirty, flat, soft, lazy, but not powerful. It gives the grocers the impression that they too can have a substitute of the atomic bomb on their walls, something that recalls the human precarity today. Unfortunately it is merely a bottle of ketchup that has stained a piece of canvas. 44

Bosquet points out that the work may give the impression of seriousness, but is only American culture--pop culture--smeared on the canvas.

The issues raised by the French critics are not that far from those presented by Sontag, Solomon and other proponents of the new sensibility; the work "bridges" art and life, it is never critical, and it represents a chance for grocers and cab drivers to share in

the new "people's" culture. What does differ is the way in which these issues are presented--for the purveyors of the new sensibility, Rauschenberg's work is a step forward, a positive way to come to terms with the American environment. Yet for the French, it was closer to a step down from high culture, into an affirmative culture of commercialism which issued from the American shores. The culture which was ostensibly being elevated to new heights for the Americans had little to do with the French tradition of high culture. While the new sensibility meant that everyone could participate in America's new democratic culture, critics vehemently argued that the values did not transfer over to Europe, because Europeans did not identify mass culture as their culture.

The issue was one which was aggravated by the events at the Biennale, where everything had a political meaning. The American artists did not find their work exempted from this, especially when the images they employed were particularly American. The fact that any discussion of the work was prefaced with descriptions of the organizers' political maneuverings assured that each image was seen in that context. The work, the show, the organization--it all became political, subsuming and vulgarizing "high art" under a mire of commercialism.

As European culture became more and more inundated with mass culture produced by the Americans, it was perhaps inevitable that high culture would eventually succumb, although the French resisted, relying on an old cultural tradition of which Bissiere was a part. But the force of the new, connected as it was to the economic power of the United States, was too strong. The march of "progress" continued and the Americans were in a position to call the tune,

possessing the military, economic and even cultural means to do so. Critic Jean-Jacques Lerrant spoke to the issue when he commented, "Pop Art is as American as Coca-Cola is. But the civilization of wine stays behind."⁴⁵ In Venice, amid the din raised by the critics protesting the coup, Rauschenberg carried away the prize for America, but not quite in the way that the France Observateur depicted it. The new sensibility found a visual expression of its victory in a work by Rauschenberg tellingly titled Coca-Cola Plan (1958, figure 12): Coke bottles smeared with paint dominate a global sphere. Coke's plan is held high with wings clipped from a relic of old culture, and American pop culture, with its superhero strength, wrested high culture from its lofty heights, placing it in the free society where consumer democracy ruled. Kennedy's Augustan age was realized: poetry was united with power, where even high art went better with Coke.

NOTES

¹Raymond Cogniat, "La peinture de ces dernières années au bord de la faillite?", Le Figaro, June 22, 1964. Cogniat was the Principal Inspector of Fine Arts in the French government at the time.

²Alain Bosquet, "Trahison à Venise," Combat, June 27, 1964.

³ABC, June 28, 1964.

⁴Alan Solomon's statement appeared in several newspapers and periodicals, including John Ashberry, "Venice Biennale Center of Controversy," New York Herald Tribune, June 23, 1964; "D.C.", "Pop'Art & Dollars ou la semaine de Venise," La Cote de Peintres 2 (July-August 1964), p. 25; "Goodbye Paris, Hello New York," Time 84 (July 17, 1964), p. 58.

⁵"Pop'Art & Dollars...", p. 25:

"Tout le monde? Tout notre petit monde s'est excité sur cette déclaration de guerre. On ne parle plus que de exigences américaines."

⁶Jean-François Revel, "XXXIIe Biennale de Venise: Triomphe du Réalisme Nationaliste," L'Oeil 115-16 (July-August 1964), p. 4:

"Les Américains, en 1964, ont envahi Venise avec une énergie toute missionnaire. Non contents d'exposer dans leur pavillon, à l'intérieur des jardins de la Biennale, ils ont organisé un gigantesque rétrospective de leurs deux vedettes, Jasper Johns and Rauschenberg--plus les comparses--dans le palais de l'ancien consulat des Etats-Unis..."

⁷Leonard, "Des dollars chez les Doges," France Observateur, June 25, 1964.

⁸Pierre Cabanne, "A Venise, L'Amérique proclame la fin de l'Ecole de Paris et lance le Pop'Art pour coloniser l'Europe," Arts, June 24, 1964:

"...nous ne sommes plus que de pauvres nègres arriérés, tout juste bons à être colonisés. La premier commando est sur place: il s'appelle le Pop'Art. L'invasion ne met même pas les formes, négligeant le pavillon officiel des Giardini, elle prend ses distances et choisit l'exterritorialité: l'ancien consulat américain...transformé en temple de la nouvelle religion. La pape y' officie: Rauschenberg, entouré de ses grands prêtres, Jasper Johns, Oldenburg, Jim Dine, Frank Stella."

The military connection was also made in "Pop'Art & Dollars...", p. 25:

"Leur stratégie évoque quelque peu celle d'une flotte atomique."

9

Pierre Restany, "La XXXII Biennale di Venezia, Biennale della Irregolarità, Domus 417 (August 1964), p. 37. The text appeared in both French and Italian; I will quote only the French text here:

"[Je] ayant pour ces artistes...la plus grande estime. Mais je conteste avec la plus grande énergie le bien-fondé du procédé qui crée un précédent fâcheux et contribue à susciter autour des américains un halo d'impérialisme culturel."

Restany' favorable review of the Pop artists is understandable when one considers that he was promoting the "new realists" in France (Niki St. Phalle, Yves Klein, Arman, César), and thus had much to gain if Pop Art was accepted and recognized internationally.

10 Calvin Tomkins, "The Big Show in Venice," Harper's Magazine 230 (April 1965), p. 103. Recall that Biennale officials had chosen to enforce the Biennale regulation where only works on the official grounds could be eligible for prizes; thus, works in the consulat annex were ineligible for prizes. Having erected a temporary plywood structure in the courtyard of the U.S. pavilion, the Americans had hoped to appease officials by exhibiting one work by each artist featured in the consulate.

11

Tomkins, Off the Wall: Robert Rauschenberg and the Art World of Our Time, (New York: Doubleday, 1980; reprint ed., Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin Books, 1981), p. 10.

12

Denny interview.

13

Conversation with Emile de Antonio, New York September 28, 1985, by telephone (de Antonio knew Solomon, Rauschenberg, Hunter and Castelli and attended the 1964 Biennale. He is currently writing a book on Leo Castelli and the New York art scene). Alan Solomon expressed his frustration over "the unwillingness of people to serve on the jury, for personal reasons, which wer apparently quite petty. One of them (and this I know to be true of Martin Friedman) was that they didn't want to help me win a prize. I think that Seitz had feelings like this, but more with respect to the museum, which after all had never won it." Alan Solomon, undated correspondence to Lois Bingham, Venice Biennale files, USIA (64-045), Washington, D. C.: National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institute).

14

It is interesting to note that Hunter was invited by telegram to adjudicate on behalf of the Americans, and since Hunter was traveling at the time, the wire was sent in care of the Leo Castelli Gallery (de Antonio interview). Apparently Rauschenberg's dealer had Hunter's number.

15

Tomkins, "The Big Show...", p. 100.

16

The incident was reported by G erald Gassiot-Talabot, "La Biennale d'Art moderne, ou les Am ricains a Venise," unidentified newspaper clipping, Leo Castelli Gallery Papers, (Washington, D.C.: Archives of American Art, microfilm), frame 257, and alluded to by Restany, p. 37.

17

Solomon, undated correspondence to Bingham.

18

Hunter's reluctance to discuss this issue and any of the events around the jury's deliberations is curious. I have attempted to contact him on two separate occasions and have sent him the Solomon text. Yet still he remains silent. Perhaps, from Hunter's perspective, some things are better left unspoken.

19

Franz Meyer, correspondence with Emile de Antonio, September 19, 1985.

20

"Pop' Art & Dollars....," p. 25.

21

Pierre Mazars, "Venice: les grandes manoeuvres due 'Pop'Art'," Le Figaro, June 25, 1964.

22

Again, this is an issue which will not be clarified until State Department documents become available. Umbro Apollonio, the Biennale Archivist (and also a member of the Biennale Committee in 1964) did not respond to my inquiries about the jury deliberations and the agreements the Committee made with the Americans; thus, the Italians' part in the agreements remains unclear. In a draft of the report submitted to Senator Jacob Javits by Alan Solomon, the U.S. Commissioner obviously felt betrayed by the Italians' refusal to abide by the agreements which would have made the artists in the annex eligible for the prize; after they rescinded on these agreements, Solomon charged

"Subsequently, the Biennale officials were most devious in their attempts to compromise their own political (and financial) problems with their evident desire for significant American participation. We were forced to accept their arbitrary behavior without making a major issue of the matter..."

Whether this implies that certain financial agreements had been made between the U.S. and Biennale officials (in which the Italians subsequently renegged on their "part of the bargain") is ambiguous. In any case, this portion of the report was deleted by USIA official Robert Sivard. See U. S. Government Memorandum (Robert Sivard to Lois Bingham), Venice Biennale files, USIA (64-045).

23

Solomon, undated correspondence with Bingham. These "certain Italians" apparently extended beyond the jurors themselves. In the same letter, Solomon mentioned "It was Falzoni who brought off the whole prize thing." Giordano Falzoni was a USIS interpreter who worked for Solomon and Denney, who had been discharged by the government but kept on at Solomon's insistence (Solomon had credited Falzoni in the Javits report but USIA officials edited out this portion of the final version). According to Alice Denney, Falzoni was very enthusiastic about the American exhibit but did not do that much regarding the final prize (Denny interview). Lois Bingham was unsure who Falzoni was, thinking he might have been a juror when I asked her to comment on Solomon's statement (Bingham interview). Emile de Antonio noted that Italian artists who had seen Rauschenberg's work in Italy before, pressured Marchiori and Valsecchi to support Rauschenberg (de Antonio interview).

24

Sam Hunter claimed that Starzinski had voted with the Italians from the beginning. Meyer supported Rauschenberg on the second vote, after having opposed him initially, with Kenneth Noland as his first choice (de Antonio interview).

25

Tomkins, "The Big Show...", p. 102.

26

Meyer, correspondence with de Antonio. Mike Sonnabend and his wife Ileana Sonnabend were the major dealers of American Pop Artists, including Rauschenberg and Johns, in Paris at the time. Ileana Sonnabend was formerly married to Castelli, and their business connections remained when Sonnabend relocated in France. Here there is some ambiguity if, as Hunter claimed, Meyer had initially favored Noland. Perhaps he preferred Johns over Rauschenberg once it became clear that Noland had little chance of winning the prize.

27

Tomkins, Off the Wall, p. 10. The performance also included music by John Cage.

28

Sam Hunter in conversation with Emile de Antonio (de Antonio interview).

29

See Pierre Schneider, "La Biennale de Venise," Paris L'Express, July 22, 1964.

30

Annette Michelson, "The 1964 Venice Biennale," Art International 8 (September 1964), p. 38.

31

The new recruits replace the standard army infantry of another map which illicted outrage in France: in 1952, Collier's Magazine featured on its cover a map of Europe with an American soldier (bearing the United Nations insignia on his helmet, along with an American flag) superimposed in front, "keeping the peace" in various designated European cities. See Collier's Magazine, April 1952.

32

Daniel Cordier, (letter) quoted in "Goodbye Paris...", p. 58.

33

Daniel Cordier, (letter), quoted by John Ashberry, "American Developments Worry the French," New York Herald Tribune, July 7, 1964.

34

"Goodbye Paris...", p. 58.

35

Robert Hughes, "Paris Post-Mortem," [London] Observer, October 18, 1964.

36

Jean Yves Mock, "Notes from Paris and London: Bissiere at the musee d'art moderne," Apollo 69 (June 1959), p. 195.

37

Raymond Cogniat, "Curieuse attitude agressive des Etats-Unis," Le Figaro, June 23, 1964:

"[Bissière] est certainement le peintre le plus qualifié pour illustrer la permanence calme et l'incessante invention dont on ressent si vivement le besoin aujourd'hui. Son ensemble est d'une dignité et d'un raffinement si indiscutables..."

38

Pierre Schneider, "Art News from Paris," Art News 61 (October 1962), p. 48.

39

Gassoit-Talabot, frame 257:

Le Pop Art est, on le sait, une représentation brutale, généralement empreinte de gigantisme, d'éléments choisis parmi le contexte urbain de la vie des Etats-Unis. Cette civilisation du confort a en quelque sorte divinisé le produit de consommation, et il était naturel, par une sorte de logique assez triste, mais inéluctable, que le denrées alimentaires, l'automobile, les symboles de l'hygiène et du bien-être américains, en somme tout le bric-à-brac de l'objet aseptisé et produit en série, deviennent la préoccupation majeure des artistes d'outre-Atlantique."

40
Schneider, "La Biennale de Venise..."

41
Leonard,:

"...ces objets usuels, déformés, bafoués, minutieusement reconstruits à d'énormes dimensions, ces fragments de bandes dessinées (de 'Comics') scrupuleusement reproduits à l'échelle des écrans de cinéma panoramiques, ces collages de photographies de magazine, tout ce bric-à-brac qui constitue le 'Pop 'Art', qu'est-ce d'autre qu'un plagiat grotesque de Dada...Mais Dada fut un mouvement essentiellement révolutionnaire, poussé par une immense passion sociale. C'était une attaque de cette société bourgeoise...Mais les neo-dadaïstes embrassent au contraire le symbole bourgeois et sont fermés à la passion."

42
Ibid.: "[Pop'Art] naissent du même processus qui engendre les 'idées' publicitaires."

43
Bosquet, "Désarroi a Venise," Le Cotes de Peintures 2 (July-August 1964), p. 29:

"Les Beatles et Johnny Hallyday ont de l'improvisation une idée plus acceptable qu'eux. Ce qui est beaucoup plus grave, c'est le nombre de gogos qui applaudissent."

44
Ibid.: "...le 'pop art' n'a rien de destructeur réellement: il est sale, il est plat, il est mou, il est paresseux, mais pas puissant. Il donne aux épiciers l'impression qu'eux aussi possèdent sur les murs un substitut à la Bombe atomique, et quelque chose qui rappelle la précarité humaine d'aujourd'hui. Hélas, ce n'est qu'une bouteille de ketch-up qui a maculé un bout de toile..."

45
Jean-Jacques Lerrant, "Le Pop'Art triomphe à la Biennale de Venise," unidentified newspaper clipping, Leo Castelli Gallery Papers, (Washington, D.C.: Archives of American Art, microfilm), frame 243:

"Les pop'art est américain comme le coca cola. Mais la civilisation de vin recule."

CONCLUSION

...pressures and playing off of influences by dealers and government officials have always been the daily bread which fed the whole [Biennale] machine. If the Americans have [sic] really for one moment threatened not to come anymore without the prize this time, they only used the natural language of the place. The government official [sic] of all countries and all dealers interested in certain artists went to Venice, trying to bring the prize home and always engaged all the expedients they could think of. If in 1964 the Americans finally succeeded, you may say against them that their aim had been no less nationalistic as the one defended by the French or English in other Biennale years. 1

Franz Meyer's words speak to the issue of the Biennale politics in general; there is no doubt that the Americans had unprecedented advantages in 1964, and they used these to press for their claim to the prize, but the French had long been exerting pressures to maintain their hold on the Biennale. Yet the force of tradition was no match for the pressure the Americans brought to bear in Venice in 1964. Alan Solomon pointed out, "We might have one [sic] it anyway (apart from the question of merit) but we really engineered it." So much for aesthetic victories. What had really triumphed in Venice was U.S. culture; Rauschenberg's "aesthetic merit" was subsumed by larger issues involving cultural hegemony.

The triumph of the new sensibility in Venice signaled a cultural shift which extended beyond the transfer of art centers, however. Not only had the French tradition been abandoned, but the notion of modernism had also been left in the past. Ironically, Clement Greenberg, who had fought for the ascendancy of American culture

through Abstract Expressionism, and later fought to preserve these gains through Post-Painterly Abstraction, found himself occupying a position not so very far from the French critics who resisted Pop Art with the tradition represented by Bissiere. In the face of a culture which advocated positive engagement with the forces of domination, Greenberg clung to a formal tradition which had lost its meaning and, perhaps, its direction; at the same time the French continued to hold onto their tradition which had already been uprooted by Abstract Expressionism. When the battle was lost, the French collectors left Paris and came to New York, and Greenberg left New York for the provinces of Canada.

In a broader sense, the Biennale prize represented a more general crisis in art; for America, the options presented ranged from formalism to an "engaged" art celebrating society. While Rauschehnberg appeared to have chosen the latter, believing as he did in the promise of liberalism, the hopes projected in Kennedy were soon shattered by the war in Vietnam.³ With this stain on the new sensibility, even Sontag renounced her membership. Yet culture never returned to the tradition preceding the ascendancy of Pop Art, and the future of the new sensibility, given its abandon of old tenets of modernism, is indicated by literary critic Fredric Jameson in his

discussion of postmodernism, worth quoting at length:

What would happen if one no longer believed in the existence of normal language, of ordinary speech, of the linguistic norm...? One could think of it in this way: perhaps the immense fragmentation and privatization of modern literature--its explosion into a host of distinct and private styles and mannerisms--foreshadows deeper and more general tendencies in social life as a whole. Supposing that modern art and modernism--far from being a kind of specialized aesthetic curiosity--actually anticipated social developments along these lines; supposing that in the decades since the emergence of the great modern styles society has itself begun to fragment in this way, each group coming to speak a curious private language of its own, each profession developing its private code or idiolect, and finally each individual coming to be a kind of linguistic island, separated from everyone else? But then in that case, the very possibility of any linguistic norm...would vanish, and we would have nothing but stylistic diversity and heterogeneity. 4

With the development of postmodernism in the 1980s, the diversity of styles has become homogenized into a new kind of speech "in a dead language"⁵ --images are pulled from the history of art just as Rauschenberg indifferently selected images from mass culture magazines. The triumph of Pop Art meant the aestheticization of consumer culture, but it made way for a postmodern movement feeds on the art movements of the past. Thus, the old traditions reappear, but in a bastardized form. Their return from the grave has incited the spirit of battle between Europe and American once again--but the ideological stakes in this new fight are yet another story.

NOTES

1

Meyer, correspondence with de Antonio.

2

Solomon, undated correspondence with Bingham.

3

This is perhaps best illustrated by Rauschenberg's own art practices and critical fortunes: in 1960, he completed a series of drawings based on Dante's "Inferno" which featured a drawing where photographs of Kennedy and Adlai Stevenson were used to represent Dante and Virgil--in hell, Richard Nixon's image was obscured with red paint (see "Thirty-four Drawings for Dante's 'Inferno'", Canto XXI). By the mid-1960s, Rauschenberg abandoned his silkscreens for a series entitled "Currents," collages of newspaper clippings which were critical of U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Interestingly, this later series did not incur much critical attention, yet when Rauschenberg revitalized his silkscreen technique, critics celebrated the return of the "enfant terrible."

4

Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," p. 114, in The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture, ed. Hal Foster, (Port Townsend, WA: Bay Press, 1983).

5

Ibid.

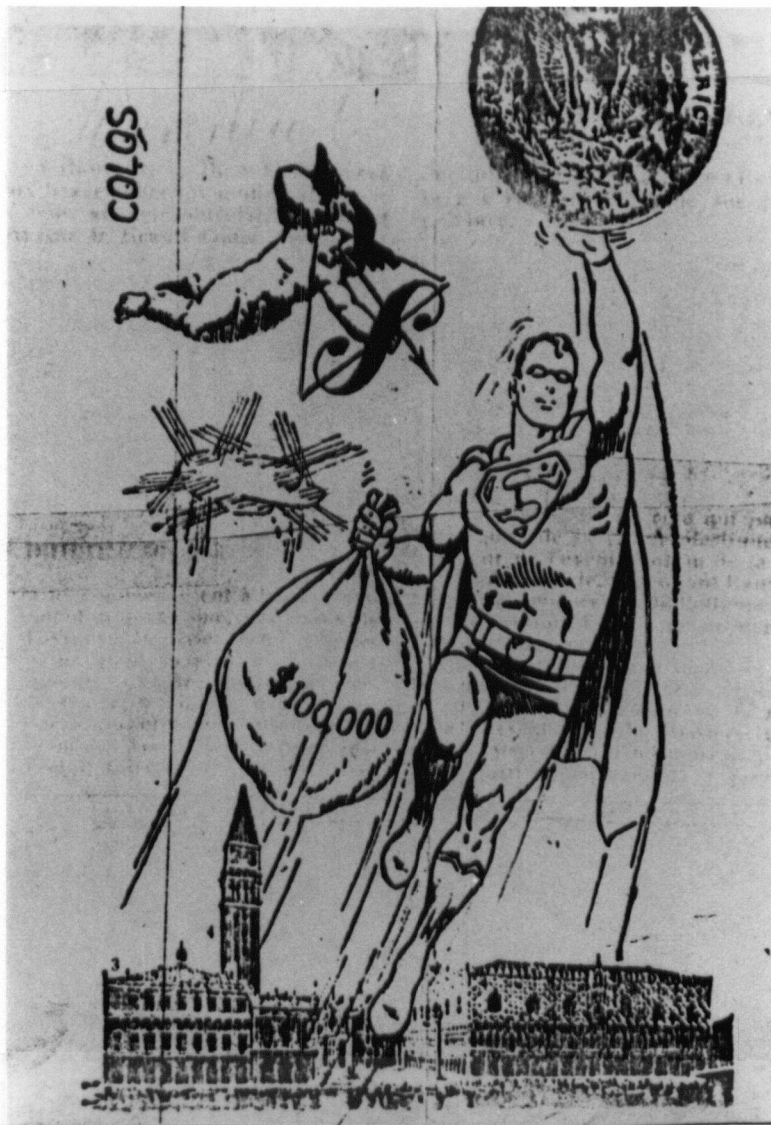


Figure 1: Editorial Cartoon, "Des dollars chez les Doges," France Observateur, June 25, 1964.

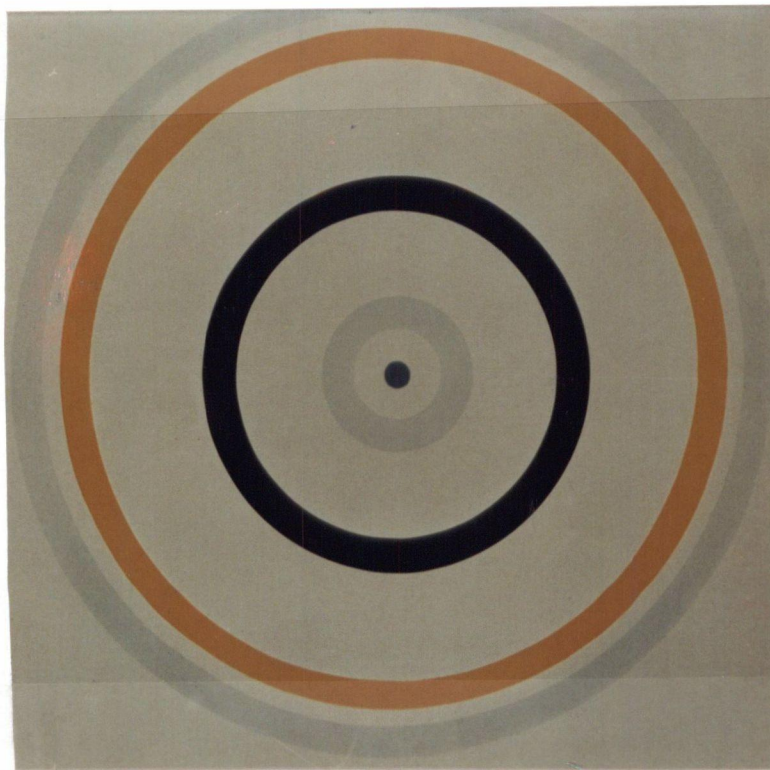


Figure 2: Kenneth Noland, Turnsole, 1961. Synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 94½ x 94½ inches. Museum of Modern Art, New York. [Source: Kenworth Moffett, Kenneth Noland (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1977)]

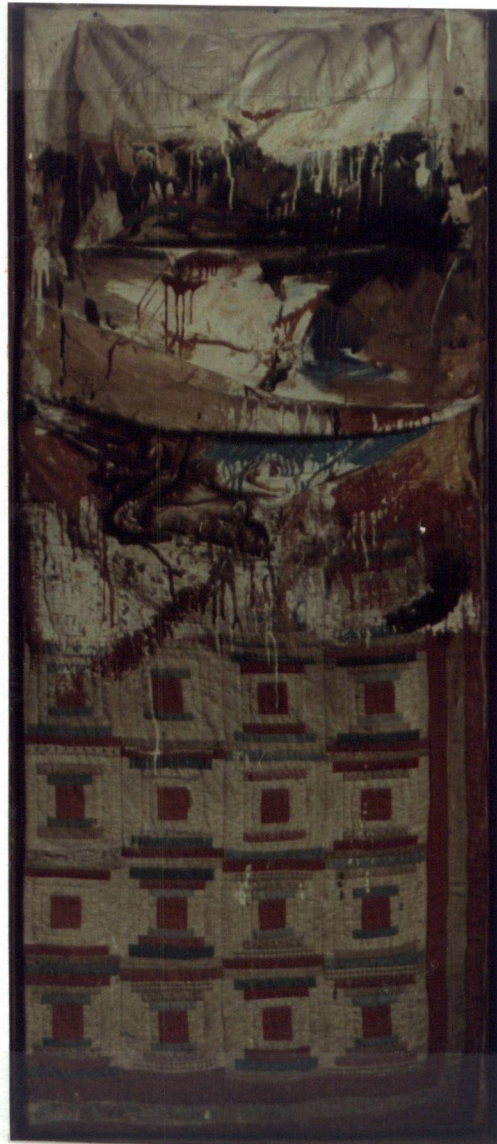


Figure 3: Robert Rauschenberg, Bed, 1955. Construction, 74 x 31 inches. Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Leo Castelli, New York. [Source: Andrew Forge, Robert Rauschenberg (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1959)]

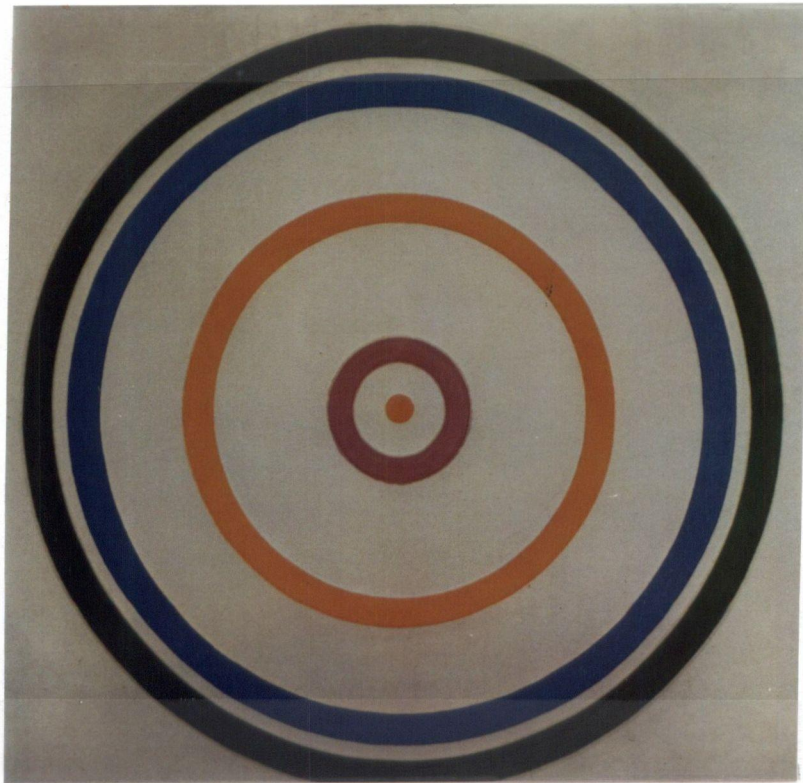


Figure 4: Kenneth Noland, Sunshine, 1961. Oil on canvas, 7 x 7 feet. Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Jack M. Farris, Solano Beach, California. [Source: Kenworth Moffett, Kenneth Noland (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1977)]



Figure 5: Robert Rauschenberg, Tree Frog, 1964. Oil on canvas, 96 x 72 inches. Collection of William Dorr, New York. [Source: Andrew Forge, Robert Rauschenberg (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1959)]

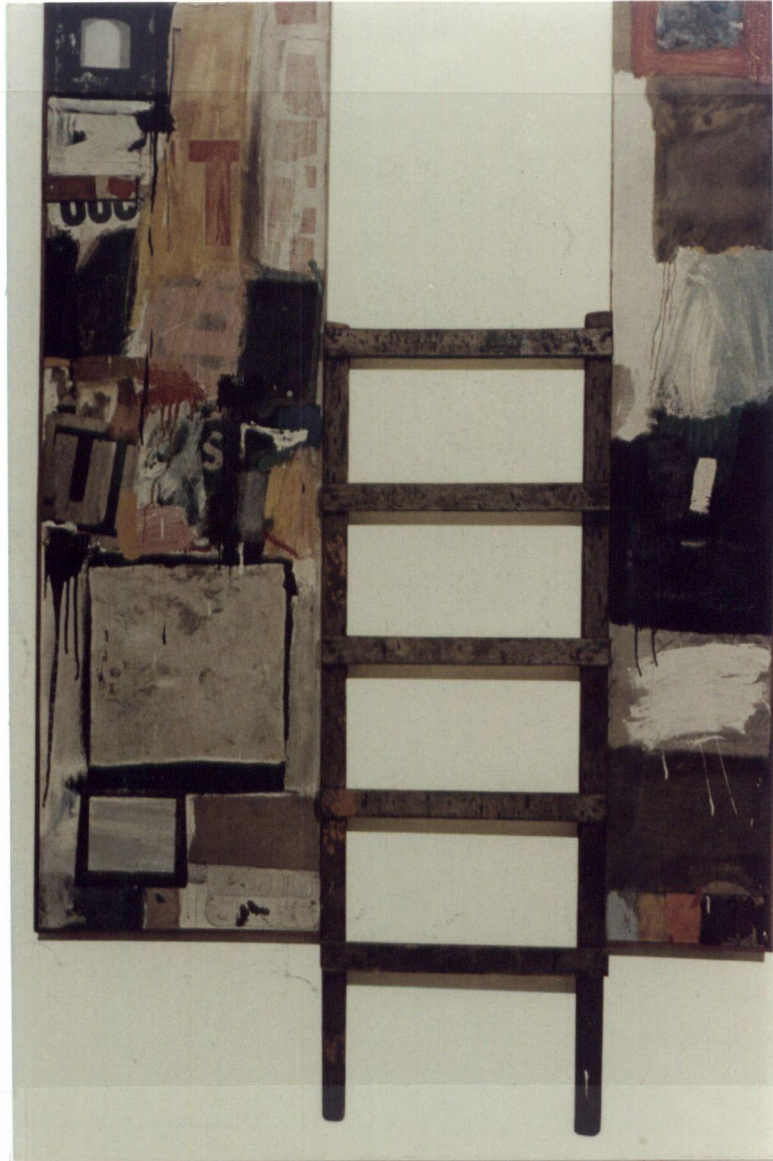


Figure 6: Robert Rauschenberg, Winter Pool, 1959. Combine painting on canvas, 89 x 59 inches. Collection Mr. and Mrs Victor Ganz, New York. [Source: Andrew Forge, Robert Rauschenberg (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1969)]



Figure 7: Robert Rauschenberg, Tracer, 1964. Oil on canvas, 84 x 60 inches. Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Titelman, Altoona, Pennsylvania. [Source: Four Germinal Painters, United States of America, XXXII International Biennial Exhibition of Art, Venice, June-October 1964. (New York: Jewish Museum)]



Figure 8: Transport of Robert Rauschenberg's work from U.S. annex to U.S. pavilion, XXXII Venice Biennale, Venice, 1964. [Source: Calvin Tomkins, "The Big Show in Venice." Harper's Magazine 230 (April 1965)]

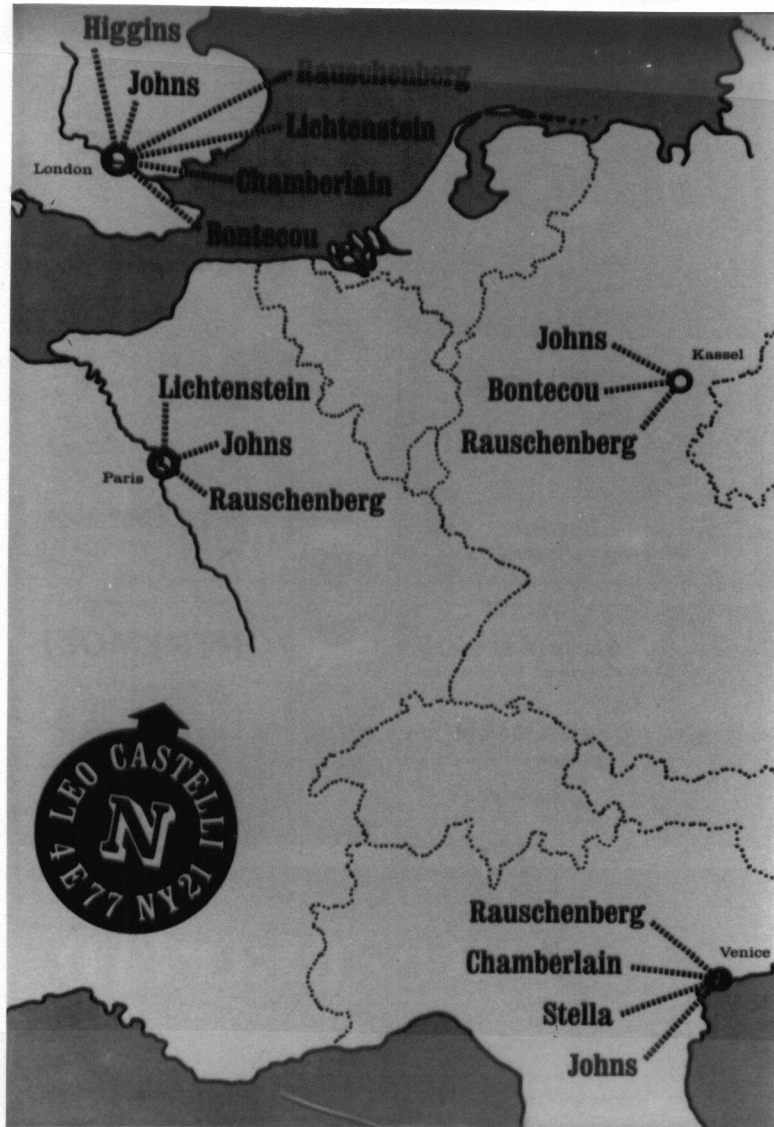


Figure 9: Advertisement for the Leo Castelli Gallery, June, 1964. [Source: L'Oeil, July 1964]



Figure 10: Robert Rauschenberg, Kite, 1963. Oil on canvas. 84 x 60 inches. Collection of Michael and Illeana Sonnabend, Paris. [Source: Andrew Forge, Robert Rauschenberg (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1959)]



Figure 11: Robert Rauschenberg, Buffalo, 1964. Oil on canvas, 96 x 72 inches. Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Robert B. Mayer, Winnetka, Illinois. [Source: Sam Hunter and John Jacobus, American Art of the 20th Century (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., n.d.)]



Figure 12: Robert Rauschenberg, Coca Cola Plan, 1958. Combine painting, 26 x 6 x 4 inches. Collection of Dr. Giuseppe Panza, Milan. [Source: Andrew Forge, Robert Rauschenberg (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1959)]

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