

# Robert Rauschenberg

## *Gluts*

20 October—22 November 2025

Thaddaeus Ropac

Paris Marais

7, rue Debelleye, 75003 Paris



Robert Rauschenberg's set design for Trisha Brown's *Lateral Pass* (1985), Teatro di San Carlo, Naples, Italy, January 1987.

Photo: Luciano Romano. Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York.

***Objects + materials occupy real space  
very much the way ideas have elbows.***

— Robert Rauschenberg

Thaddaeus Ropac Paris Marais presents the first exhibition in 15 years dedicated to Robert Rauschenberg's sculptural *Glut* series (1986–94), and the first exhibition of the series ever held in France. In the year of the centenary of the American artist's birth, *Gluts* runs in parallel to an extensive programme of exhibitions in Rauschenberg's honour taking place at museums and institutions around the world.

Beginning with his early Combines (1954–64), Robert Rauschenberg (1925–2008) revolutionised the picture plane through the inclusion of everyday objects, which he termed 'gifts from the street', redefining and expanding the boundaries of what could be considered an artwork. It was in this spirit that he created his *Glut* series of sculptural assemblages at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. They represent one of his earliest forays into a new material – metal – in the form of found objects assembled and riveted together to create wall reliefs and freestanding sculptures. Unlike in the artist's earlier



Installation view, Robert Rauschenberg: *Gluts*, Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, Spain, 13 February—12 September 2010  
Photo: Erika Barahona-Ede

Combines, however, the found elements in the *Gluts* are no longer affixed to canvas supports. Instead, they become entirely autonomous, placed directly on the wall or the ground in a wholehearted engagement with the poetics of recycling and reclamation.

The *Gluts* would be the artist's final series of sculptures, as well as his most enduring: the usually restless Rauschenberg continued returning to the series over the span of almost a decade. The *Gluts* are rarely seen together, with the last exhibition dedicated to them held in 2009–10 at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice; the Museum Tinguely, Basel; and the Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao. The series was inspired by the artist's visit to Texas in 1985 for his exhibition at the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston. At the time, Rauschenberg's native Texas was in the midst of a recession due to a surplus, or 'glut', in the oil market, turning its landscape into a wasteland of abandoned vehicles and the rusting signs of failed petrol stations. Returning to his studio in Captiva Island, Florida, Rauschenberg, marked by what he had seen in Texas, sought out similar objects in the local scrapyard, salvaging discarded signs and automotive and industrial parts to create the first *Gluts*: a gesture that anticipated the environmental concerns that, decades later, have taken a central position in artistic thought and production.



Robert Rauschenberg, *Yellow Moby Glut*, 1986.  
Assembled metal. 335.4 x 305.5 x 45 cm (132 x 120.25 x 17.75 in)  
Photo: Ron Amstutz

Rauschenberg's work throughout the decades embodied his lifelong commitment to collaboration with performers, artists and engineers. As well as choreographing his own performances, he designed lighting, sets and costumes for



Lance Gries, Carolyn Lucas, Trisha Brown, Irene Hultman, and Jeffrey Axelrod in Trisha Brown's *Lateral Pass* (1985), with set and costumes by Robert Rauschenberg, Teatro di San Carlo, Naples, Italy, January 1987. Photo: Luciano Romano. Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York.

avant-garde productions by Merce Cunningham, Trisha Brown and Paul Taylor, among others. In 1987, when the set for a performance of Trisha Brown Dance Company's *Lateral Pass* (1985) in Naples, Italy was stuck in a dock strike and would not make it to the theatre by opening night, Rauschenberg scoured the streets and scrap heaps of Naples to collect materials to make a replacement set. As Brown recalled: 'Bob and his team dumped a truckload of junk backstage and proceeded to sort, stack, drill, and grommet into the night.' He later incorporated pieces from this stage set into the *Glut* series, referring to them as the *Neapolitan Gluts*. The exhibition at Thaddaeus Ropac Paris Marais presents several examples of the Neapolitan *Glut* series alongside the *Gluts* made in Captiva Island.

In some *Gluts*, the source objects are easily distinguishable through identifying markings, in particular painted lettering: truncated business signs; instructions on industrial pieces; road signs. *Summer Glut Fence* (1987) notably retains two

faded but legible stop signs. As curator and art historian Susan Davidson wrote in the catalogue accompanying the exhibition of the *Gluts* at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in 2009: 'Directionals have been a visual trope in Rauschenberg's work as he sought to directly engage the viewer by speaking in the imperatives of the everyday landscape'. Such 'directionals' are found across his works; the stop sign, in particular, appears in another *Glut*, *Stop Side Early Winter Glut* (1987), in the collection of The Museum of Modern Art, New York. But Rauschenberg chose and assembled the *Gluts* not only based on the symbolic significance of their components or the semiotic possibilities of their combination, but also for their formal properties, dissimulating and distilling his source objects into 'lean expressions' of a refined lyricism that belies their scrapyard origins.

The *Gluts*, Davidson adds, represent 'an extremely mature and confident body of work, personal exercises or amusements for Rauschenberg, where the whole becomes more





Robert Rauschenberg, *Summer Glut Fence*, 1987  
Assembled metal and plastic. 114.3 × 219.7 × 27.9 cm (45 × 86.5 × 11 in)

than the sum of its parts.’ At first glance the viewer finds elegant formal abstraction; with a second look, what Mark Alizart calls ‘the appearance of function’ in his essay in the catalogue accompanying the exhibition. In *Balcone Glut (Neapolitan)* (1987), a ladder projects through the



Robert Rauschenberg, *Greek Toy Glut (Neapolitan)*, 1987  
Assembled metal. 207 × 254 × 39.4 cm (81.5 × 100 × 15.5 in)  
Photo: Ron Amstutz

opening in a ventilation duct to imply the titular ‘balcony’; the interconnected wheel in *Tropical Mill Glut* (1989) suggests the titular device. But more than this, there is a sense of anthropomorphism across the *Gluts*, where the coldest, hardest of materials is animated with details that play on our pareidolia to suggest dangling legs or eyes. These futuristic constructions made from the detritus of a society in which industrialisation has begun to eat itself alive, unexpectedly, call for ‘a more human world, not less’; ‘ultimately’, as Alizart continues, ‘the logical consequence of a philosophy that associates art and life’.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue including archival photography relating to the *Gluts*, as well as an essay by philosopher Mark Alizart and an excerpt of choreographer Trisha Brown’s account of the creation of the *Neapolitan Gluts*.

*Robert Rauschenberg: Gluts* is presented in cooperation with the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation. Thaddaeus Ropac gallery has been a partner of the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation since April 2015 and the partnership has resulted in a series of exhibitions, focusing on some of the artist’s most innovative and under-recognised series of the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s, including his *Spreads* (1975–83), *Salvage paintings* (1983–85), *Borealis* (1989), *Night Shades* (1991) and *Phantoms* (1991). For further information on the mission and programmes of the Foundation, visit [www.rauschenbergfoundation.org](http://www.rauschenbergfoundation.org) and follow them on Instagram at @rauschenbergfoundation.



Robert Rauschenberg, Villa Volpicelli, Naples, Italy, April 1987.  
Photo: Peppe Avallone. Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York.

### 100 years of Robert Rauschenberg

*Gluts* at Thaddaeus Ropac Paris Marais opens 100 years – almost to the day – after Robert Rauschenberg’s birth on 22 October 1925. In celebration of his centenary, a wide-ranging programme of exhibitions dedicated to the artist is taking place in 2025–26. *Gluts* will run concurrently with exhibitions at the Museum Ludwig, Cologne (until 11 January 2026); Fundación Juan March, Madrid (until 18 January 2026); The Menil Collection, Houston (until 1 March 2026); The Guggenheim, New York (until 5 April 2026); and Museum of the City of New York (until 19 April 2026), as well as an exhibition dedicated to

Rauschenberg’s collaboration with Trisha Brown on the 1979 dance piece *Glacial Decoy* at Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (until 24 May 2026). These will be followed by further exhibitions at M+ Hong Kong (opening November 2025) and Kunsthalle Krems (opening April 2026). Organised by the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, the programme of exhibitions, which is accompanied by dozens of Centennial grants encouraging the activation of Rauschenberg’s works in public collections, aims to build on the artist’s legacy of promoting cross-disciplinary explorations and driving social change.

## About the artist

Over the course of his 60-year career, Robert Rauschenberg's work was inspired by wide-ranging experiences, lifelong collaborations and a spirit of experimentation with new materials and techniques. Although he eluded association with any specific movement, he has been identified as a forerunner of practically every post-war artistic development since Abstract Expressionism. His early Combines (1954–64) established an ongoing dialogue between painting and sculpture, between the handmade and the readymade and between the artist's hand and the mechanically reproduced image.

Rauschenberg attended the Kansas City Art Institute and later the Académie Julian in Paris and The Art Students League in New York, but the young artist's most profound formative experience was at the experimental Black Mountain College in North Carolina, where he enrolled in 1948 alongside fellow artist and his future wife Susan Weil. There he studied under painter and Bauhaus teacher Josef Albers and cultivated relationships with composer John Cage and choreographer Merce Cunningham, who became long-standing friends and artistic collaborators. The trio, along with several other creatives, participated in *Theater Piece No. 1* (1952), a multimedia performance – now recognised as the first 'Happening' – that incorporated poetry, music, dance and film, as well as panels of Rauschenberg's *White Paintings* (1951) suspended from the ceiling. Cage cited these as an inspiration for his composition *4'33''* (1952), which creates a framework that prompts a heightened awareness of ambient sound.

By the end of 1953, Rauschenberg had begun integrating a litany of found materials and objects into his *Red Paintings* (1953–54), which evolved into his seminal Combines. Incorporating everything from a stuffed goat to street signs and a bed quilt, the Combines obliterated the boundary between painting and sculpture, introducing a new relationship between viewer and artwork. In 1962 he

began making paintings that combined gestural brushwork with silkscreened imagery drawn from newspapers, magazines and his own photographs. Following his first retrospective, organised by the Jewish Museum, New York in 1963, Rauschenberg was awarded the International Grand Prize in Painting at the Venice Biennale in 1964. He co-founded Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.) – with engineers Billy Klüver and Fred Waldhauer and artist Robert Whitman – which paired artists and engineers for collaborative projects. Together with Klüver, Rauschenberg created works like *Oracle* (1962–65), which incorporated transistor radio technology, and the responsive light installation *Soundings* (1968).

In 1970, Rauschenberg moved his primary residence and studio to Captiva, Florida, where he created several series of works focused on materiality, including the *Cardboards* (1971–72), wall reliefs created from discarded boxes, and the *Jammers* (1975–76), made predominantly from sewn fabric. His experimentation with printing techniques also continued across a range of media, including the solvent-transfer *Hoarfrosts* (1974–76), multimedia *Spreads* (1975–83) and his metal works from the 1980s and 1990s, including the *Gluts* (1986–94), *Shiners* (1986–93), *Urban Bourbons* (1988–96) and *Borealis* (1989–92). In addition to his own artmaking practice, Rauschenberg became a spokesperson for artists and the creative community at large. In September 1970, he founded Change, Inc., a non-profit organisation that helped artists with emergency expenses and from 1984–91, he personally funded the Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange (ROCI) project. For this extensive touring programme, Rauschenberg travelled to ten countries outside of the United States – Mexico, Chile, Venezuela, China, Tibet, Japan, Cuba, the USSR, Germany and Malaysia – with the aim of sparking cross-cultural dialogue and understanding through the creative process.



Press release

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