

A FINE REGARD



Essays in Honor of Kirk Varnedoe

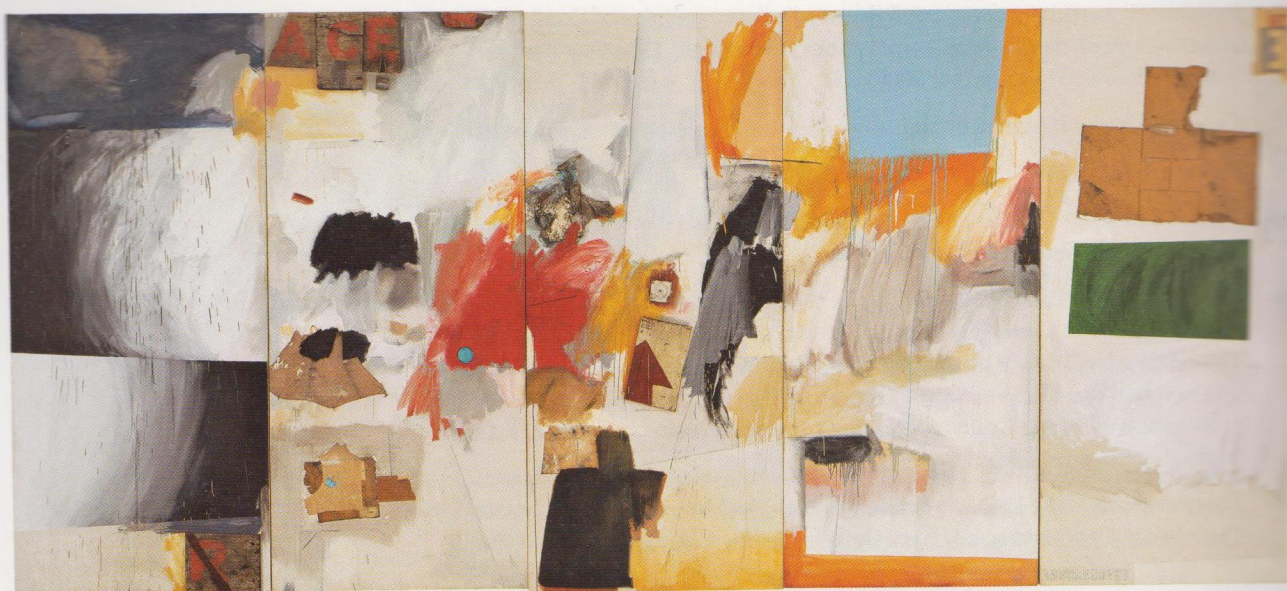
Kirk Varnedoe

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ESSAYS IN HONOR OF KIRK VARNEDOE

Edited by
Patricia G. Berman and Gertje R. Utley

ASHGATE



16.1 Robert Rauschenberg, *Ace*, 1962

Oil, paper, cardboard, fabric, wood, and metal on canvas; five panels: 108 × 240 × 7½ in. (274 × 610 × 19 cm) overall
 Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo NY; gift of Seymour H. Knox Jr, 1963
 (Art © Robert Rauschenberg / licensed by VAGA, New York)

16 ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG'S *ACE* OF 1962: AN INTERPRETATION¹

Roni Feinstein

"... to reach the Impossibility of sufficient visual memory to transfer from one like object to another the memory imprint."

Marcel Duchamp, 1959²

With its boundless spaces, painterly exuberance, and improvisational nature, *Ace* (Fig. 16.1) served as Robert Rauschenberg's farewell to the Combine mode, which defined his early career. A five-panel work and, at 9 by 20 feet (274 × 610 cm), the most monumental of all the Combines, *Ace* features a number of compositional motifs and graphic and painterly effects that were without precedent in the artist's work. Yet, in the copious literature surrounding Rauschenberg's oeuvre, *Ace* has never been the subject of investigation.

It is known that Rauschenberg's nickname for Steve Paxton, a Merce Cunningham dancer and founding member of Judson Dance Theatre, who was the artist's companion from about 1962 to 1966, at some point became "Ace." Might this have some relevance to the meaning of the work? An "ace" is a person who excels at something; another definition is that of a fighter pilot who has brought down a prescribed number of planes. The latter might have some significance to *Ace*, as multiple references to birds and wings are strewn across the Combine's surface, and flight is a recurrent theme in Rauschenberg's art, but this in no way accounts for other motifs found in the work. Further compounding the mystery is the fact that the manner in which Rauschenberg signed and titled the work at left and right along the painting's bottom edge suggests not just the word *ace*, but *race* as well. The question is raised: a race with whom and for what?

Ace was executed at the juncture in Rauschenberg's life when he was beginning his relationship with Paxton and, even more significantly, ending the period of personal and artistic interchange with Jasper Johns that had extended from 1954 to 1961.³ In this essay, the departures from Rauschenberg's usual working method and *Ace*'s monumental scale will be taken as indicative of the artist's having had a particular, grand scheme in mind when approaching this work, one laden with personal significance and, as suggested by *race*, posed either as a challenge or as a reaction to a presumed one.

It will be suggested that *Ace* presents a veiled representation of a religious theme, specifically the Crucifixion, and that it was executed in response to Johns's five-panel painting *Diver*, also of 1962. Several years ago, I proposed that Johns's painting, which is generally interpreted as an illustration of the suicide by drowning of the poet Hart Crane, may also be understood to illustrate the Crucifixion of Christ.⁴ I postulated that *Diver* was inspired by Picasso's small *Crucifixion* of 1930 (which was, in turn, based on Mathias Grünewald's Crucifixion scene in the Isenheim Altarpiece). In lieu of Johns's diver plunging into the watery depths, Rauschenberg has substituted a flying ace taking off into the heavenly domain. Rauschenberg rose to new heights in tackling this lofty subject from the history of art, creating a work of remarkable sweep and scope whose significance within the context of his oeuvre has yet to be acknowledged.

Before examining *Ace*, is it necessary to set the work in the context of Rauschenberg's work of the early 1960s, as the Combines of this period are substantially different from those of the 1950s, which are generally better known. In *Rebus* (1955), *Odalisk* (1955–58), *Monogram* (1955–59), and other work of the earlier decade, collage materials held sway. Among these were taxidermically stuffed animals, plain and printed papers and fabrics, articles of clothing, and photographs and photographic reproductions from magazines and newspapers. Paintwork was held to a minimum, confined to mark making of varying sorts (daubs, drips, scumbles, paint squeezed directly from the tube, etc.). By 1960 Rauschenberg had moved in two different directions – toward painterly painting on the one hand and toward sculpture on the other. In the first case, which applies to *Ace*, many of his canvases now appeared as open, airy fields filled with lush, gestural brushstrokes in bright, glowing colors. Whereas the artist had earlier attempted to sidestep the painterly effects of his Abstract Expressionist elders by limiting his use of paint, his paintwork was now within the framework of the de Kooning style. Entering Rauschenberg's art in the company of this new painterliness was an enhanced illusionism, the expressionistic brushwork conjuring up plays of space and depth. As in his earlier work, effects of illusion were generally countered by elements of collage, paint drips, or other marks that asserted the literal flatness of the picture surface. Yet perhaps nowhere in Rauschenberg's art was a sense of open space cultivated more than in *Ace*.

Dispersed across *Ace*'s span are white-painted areas and sections of blank canvas that punch holes in the expansive picture surface. In the second panel from the right, a large, light blue rectangular form with a volley of drips extending down from it rests on the surface. Seemingly behind this form and below it is an area of painterly activity that suggests

a deep, light-filled space. The illusionism of the panel is firmly countered (or enhanced?) by the orange and white rectangular "frame" that appears at its lower edge. In the panel to the extreme right, which has a fairly uniform white ground, part of a flattened cardboard carton is positioned above a green, slightly off-kilter rectangular shape. Although the two forms float freely against the open space, a tension and connection exist between them. For this observer, the forms conjure the impression of an airplane seen from above (the carton), casting a partial shadow on the ground below. The relative severity or bareness of this panel is as uncharacteristic of Rauschenberg as is its sense of limitless space.

The suggestion of an airplane is, in part, in response to the title's allusion to a combat pilot, although other references to flight appear elsewhere in the work. On the panel second from the left is a flattened paint can label whose color reads "Canary Yellow." On a piece of fabric collaged over the can are painted smudges that together seem to represent a blue butterfly. At the top of the panel, a segment of a flattened umbrella may be taken to represent a fragment of a bird's wing.⁵ On the right edge of the adjoining central panel, next to part of a red arrow pointing skyward, is a large, gesturally rendered, gray winglike shape.

When Rauschenberg referred to birds in his work of the 1950s, which he did frequently, he used actual stuffed birds or birds' wings, as seen in *Hazard* (1957), *Inlet* (1959), *Canyon* (1959), and *Painting with Gray Wing* (1959), or photographs or found illustrations of birds. (The freestanding *Coca-Cola Plan* (1958) is flanked by a matched set of cast-metal bird wings.) In *Combines before Ace*, Rauschenberg virtually never employed paint to representational ends, as he did here; previously, paint was called on exclusively to mark and articulate a Combine's surface. The use of artistic media for figurative purposes, as seen in *Ace*, finds a precedent in Rauschenberg's work in his drawings after Dante's *Inferno*, a project that occupied him from 1958 through late 1960, which also involved the illustration of a literary (albeit not biblical) theme. In 34 transfer drawings, one illustrating each of the 34 cantos of the poem, Rauschenberg translated Dante's text, written in fourteenth-century Tuscan, into mid-twentieth-century American through the use of photographic images drawn from popular magazines. The mass-media images, moistened with solvent and then rubbed on the reverse for transfer onto a paper surface, were intermingled with extensive surface markings made with watercolor, gouache, and pencil. Here, the markings served a narrative purpose, for both figurative and expressive ends. In *Canto II*, for example, stabbing lines represented stinging wasps; in *Canto VIII*, two brightly glowing diagonal marks represented the "two horns of flame" seen by Dante and Virgil; and in *Canto XI*, an extended passage was given to the description of the forms of boulders.

In its illustration of and allusion to airplanes, birds, and wings set within the context of a boundless space, *Ace* can be understood to stand in line with any number of Rauschenberg's works from the 1950s and 1960s (and beyond) that variously address the theme of flight, from *Satellite* (1955), with its ironically flightless pheasant, to *First Landing Jump* (1959), with its suggestion of an initial parachute jump, to *Axle* (1963), a silk-screen painting that celebrates a space capsule's landing.⁶ In *Ace*, however, the theme of flight appears to be only part of the story, as it leaves any number of the more remarkable motifs of the work unexplained.

The far left-hand panel of *Ace*, for example, is dominated by an abstract painterly motif in tonal gradations ranging from brilliant white to inky black; the motif is divided roughly in half, reversing direction along a horizontal axis. The motif carves a hemispherical hole in the picture surface and seems to represent a terrible and dramatic storm, with turbulent skies, torrential rain, and bursts of light. A transparent blue band overlaps the motif at the panel's top edge. At the lower edge, in an area of relative calm, is a red letter *R* stenciled on a wooden board, presumably a found element. A similarly painted *A*, *C*, and *E* appear at the top edge of the second panel, spelling out the work's title. The *R* on the adjoining panel can be joined with them to form the word *RACE*. At the same time, the *R* reaches across *Ace*'s span to the extreme right-hand panel, where in small thin letters *AUSCHENBERG* is stenciled in pencil.

Suspended from a nail on the wooden board bearing the *E* of *ACE* is a small, unlabeled, unopened metal can. Below, overlapped by the bit of umbrella and the "Canary Yellow" paint can label, is a perspective drawing in pencil of a stepladder in an opened position. The uniqueness of this motif in the context of Rauschenberg's art cannot be overemphasized, as the artist simply does not draw. It has already been pointed out that he does not typically offer painted representations of the sort already suggested in the discussion of the large gray bird's wing – and also seen in the evocation of the storm – although these are less startling in the context of his oeuvre, since they are loosely rendered and merely suggestive, open to questions of identity and interpretation. The ladder, however, is clear and highly specific. The only precedents for drawn motifs that can be found in his art, other than flat outline tracings (such as of his foot in *Canto XIV* and of his naked self in the right-hand panel of the *Combine Wager* of 1959), are the few technical drawings the artist made in which he sought to work out the mechanics of a particularly cumbersome piece. There are, for example, three known preliminary studies for *Monogram* (1955–59), perspective drawings that explore the manner in which a stuffed angora goat could best be integrated into a

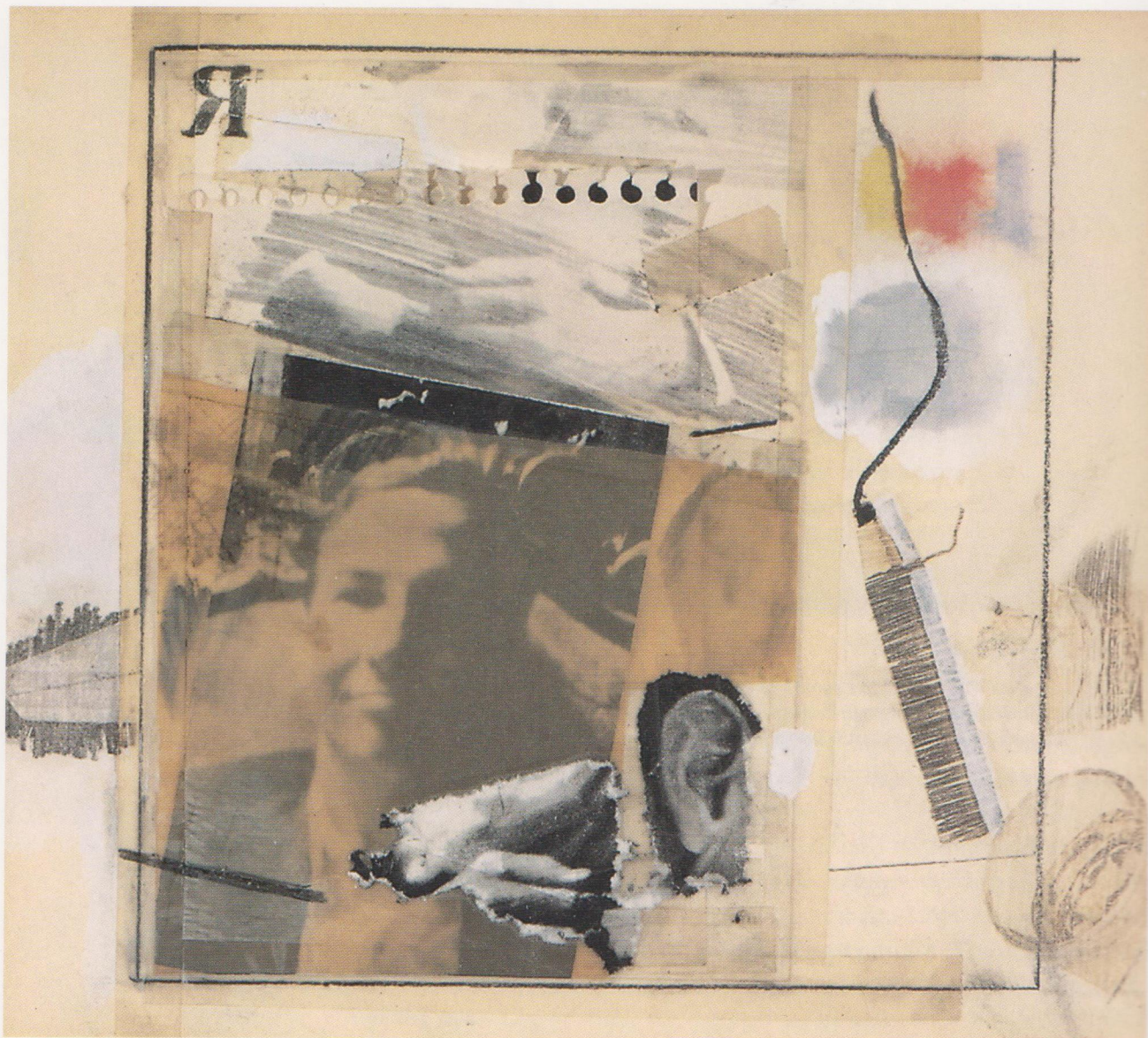


16.2 Jasper Johns, *Diver*, 1962

Oil on canvas with objects; five panels: 90 × 170 in. (229 × 432 cm) overall

Collection of Irma and Norman Braman

(Photograph by Jim Strong; art © Jasper Johns/licensed by VAGA, New York)



16.3 Rauschenberg, *Untitled (Self-Portrait)*, 1965

Ink, pencil, paper, and tape on paper, 8 × 9 in. (20.3 × 20.9 cm)

Collection of Mrs Leo Castelli, New York

(Art © Robert Rauschenberg/licensed by VAGA, New York)

Combine. In the Combine *Winter Pool* (1959), an actual wooden ladder appears, positioned flat against the wall. In *Ace*, a ladder is not only drawn on the canvas but extends into illusionistic space.

In the middle of *Ace*'s central panel is a white-painted wooden doorknob from whose surface a single nail protrudes. Below is the portion of the red arrow printed on a wooden board pointing upward. To the right is the large gray "wing," and to the left is a crumpled piece of metal whose shape may also allude to that of a bird with outstretched wings. Extending vertically above the doorknob is a clearly defined straight-edged, white-painted element, a counterpart to the red-painted vertical element (the supposed fragment of the diving board) seen at the bottom center of Johns's *Diver* (Fig. 16.2).

Diver is as much a Combine as *Ace* is, as it too integrates elements of collage – a ruler, tape measure, and set of silverware held in place with metal chains – with paint drips, a wide variety of painted marks, and gestural paintwork, since Johns had moved to a style of painterly painting in 1959, a year or two before Rauschenberg. Much has been written about the exchanges and dialogue that took place in the work of these two artists during the period of their close association, when they lived in the same building and saw each other's work daily.⁷ Even after the two went their separate ways, Johns moving to South Carolina and Rauschenberg dividing his time between Florida and New York, they continued to be aware of and respond to one another's work, as will be demonstrated with *Ace* and *Diver*. For further evidence that this was the case, particularly with regard to Rauschenberg's looking at and responding to Johns, one need look no further than two slightly later works that feature each artist's first self-portrait, Rauschenberg's untitled transfer drawing with collage of 1965 (Fig. 16.3) and Johns's assemblages *Souvenir* and *Souvenir 2* (both versions 1964; the latter shown here as Fig. 16.4). The Rauschenberg clearly plays off the works by Johns in structure and in the representation of self. In each, the artist's photographic image appears in the lower left. Johns's head appears on a plate surrounded by the names of the primary colors, both the stenciled color names and the colors themselves being basic components of his art; Rauschenberg's visage is surrounded by a variety of images, many of them recurrent in his art (among them are a glass of liquid, two images of an ear, clasped hands and what appears to be an airplane wing). In *Souvenir 2*, Johns's image overlaps a backward-facing canvas, while Rauschenberg's rests on a sheet of notebook paper. The image of the charcoal pencil in the Rauschenberg occupies the place of the actual flashlight in the Johns.

Rauschenberg's use of stenciled letters in *Ace* can be understood as a deliberate and specific reference to Johns, as it was wholly atypical for Rauschenberg to include his name and the title of a work on the surface

16.4 Johns, *Souvenir 2*, 1964

Oil and collage on canvas with
objects, 28¾ × 21 in. (73 × 53.3 cm)
Collection of Barbara and Richard S. Lane
(Art © Jasper Johns/licensed
by VAGA, New York)



of a Combine; Johns had initiated this practice in his art about 1960. In *Diver*, *DIVER* is stenciled at the lower left and *JJ62* at the lower right. The words *RED*, *YELLOW* (more accurately, *YELL*), and *BLUE* are stenciled in larger letters elsewhere on the far right-hand panel. Rauschenberg's use of stencils to spell the word *RACE* can perhaps be seen as a nod to Johns, alluding to a friendly spirit of competition in the creation of the parallel works.

On the far left-hand panel of Johns's five-panel painting is an image even more apocalyptic in appearance than the one found in the corresponding panel in *Ace*. The device-circle motif seen in a number of Johns's earlier works now appears as a semicircle formed of brilliant, glowing colors. It is silhouetted against a white ground above an area of



16.5 Pablo Picasso, *Crucifixion*, 1930

Oil on plywood, $\leq 19 \times 25\frac{7}{8}$

in. ($\leq 48.2 \times 65.7$ cm)

Musée Picasso, Paris

(Photograph © 2007 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York; R.G. Ojeda)

intensive gestural activity in shades of gray. The panel to the right offers a gray scale presented in a vertically stacked, ladderlike configuration. The figure schematically represented at the center of the composition has been identified as Hart Crane, the South Carolina-born poet whose works Johns is known to have read and admired, diving into a stormy sea. In the magnificent large-scale drawing, characterized by a Rembrandtesque chiaroscuro, which began as a study for the painting (but was completed later, in 1963 (The Museum of Modern Art, New York)), lines and arrows sweep out in arcs to the left and right of the lower set of handprints, so that a spreading of the arms is indicated. The resulting posture, which is set against a vertical bar that bisects the symmetrical composition, is that of an inverted cross.

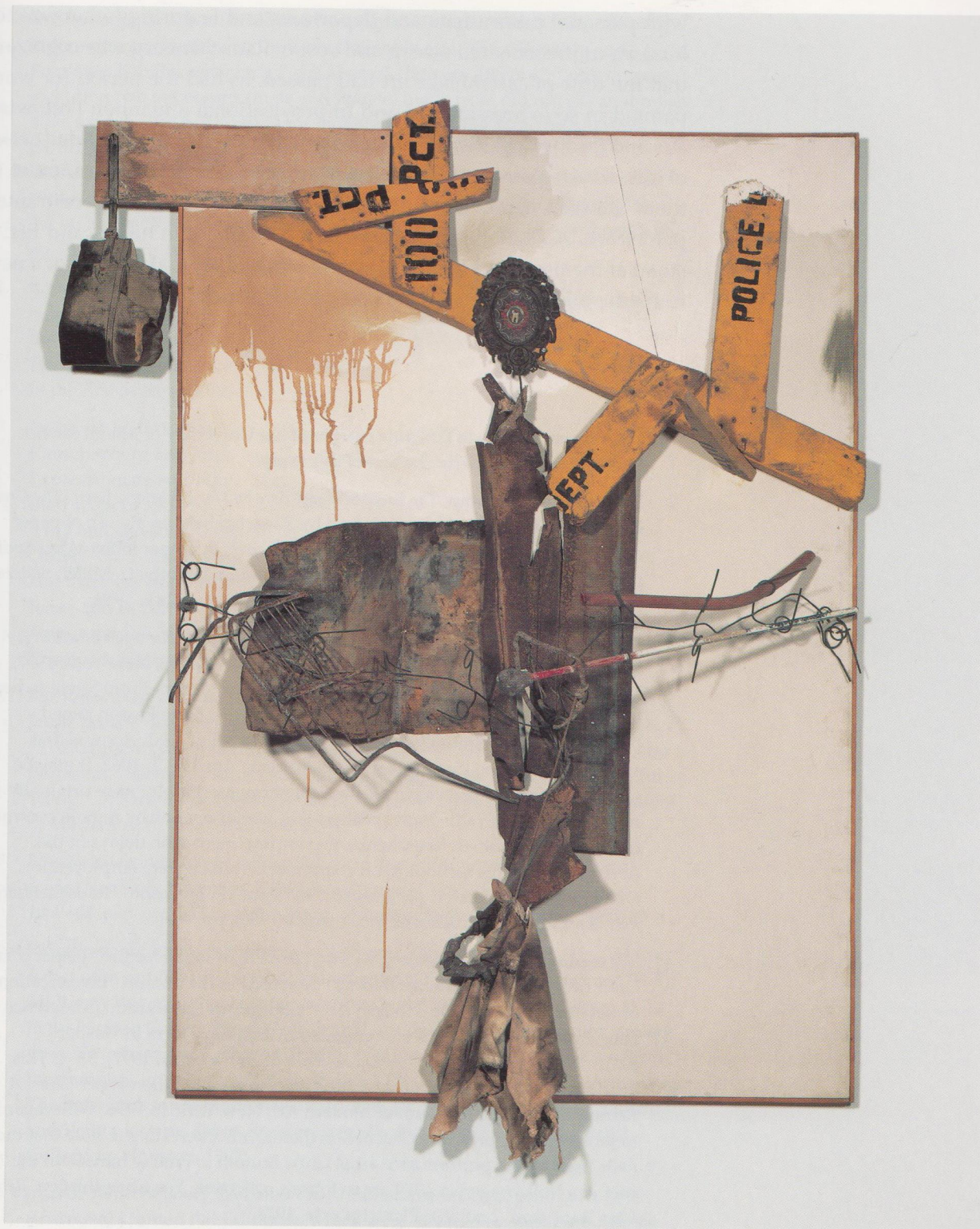
In the *Diver* painting, the possible Crucifixion image is set in the midst of a dispersed, multipart composition rendered in radiant colors. That its source may reside in Picasso's small *Crucifixion* of 1930 (Fig. 16.5) is suggested by a number of factors. First is the similar coloration of the two paintings: both have an exuberant palette dominated by the primaries, with areas reserved for the play of black and white. At the same time, the steplike gray scale in the Johns serves as a reference and compositional counterpart to the ladder in the Picasso; the scraped circle finds an echo in Picasso's oversize green sponge; and the arms of the crucified figures are similarly positioned and articulated. (Given the benefits of hindsight and the fact that Johns mined *The Resurrection* panel of Grünewald's Isenheim Altarpiece for an image in his work of

the 1980s,⁸ it does not seem a stretch to suggest that the glowing orb to the left in *Diver* might have been influenced by the one surrounding Grünewald's risen Christ.)

It seems probable that Rauschenberg saw Johns's painting (and possibly the drawing as well), understood the imagery for what it was, and sought to respond in kind with a monumental statement of his own. Although of very different form, the whirling vortex on *Ace*'s far left-hand panel may be seen as a counterpart to Johns's glowing orb, the stepladder a reference to Johns's stepped gray scale (the ladder in the Picasso), and the nail in the doorknob at the very center, sandwiched between the vertical white bar and the piece of wood bearing the upward-pointing arrow, a much abbreviated notation for the crucified Christ. In Rauschenberg's work, the multiple references to elevation and flight might refer to the impending Resurrection.

Johns followed *Diver* with a series of related works – *Passage*, *Out the Window II*, *Land's End*, and *Periscope (Hart Crane)* – that both extends and reinforces the Crucifixion theme. In the darkly brooding *Periscope (Hart Crane)* of 1963, for example, the scraped circle, silhouetted against a seemingly windswept, turbulent field, becomes a surrogate for the cross; an arm print bisects the form, thereby assuming the appropriate position. For Rauschenberg, *Ace* and the religious theme contained within it was a one-shot deal – or was it? In 1964 he executed two silk-screen paintings – *Retroactive I* and *Trapeze* – that appear to represent biblical themes, the former the Annunciation and the second the Expulsion, in each case the artist using found mass-media imagery to convey content.⁹ In 1961 Rauschenberg had created *Coexistence* (Fig. 16.6), a late sculptural (versus painterly) Combine in which a three-dimensional relief consisting of found elements is set against a passive support (it bears only minor touches of paint). The structure of the work appears to be that of a crucifix. An oval saint's tooth relic represents the head, a collection of junk materials (which include a large metal object of unknown origin; a broken metal grill; heavy, twisted pieces of wire; a metal pipe; a baton; and a filthy piece of cloth) indicates the body and the upright element of the cross, and a fragmented police barricade refers to the outstretched arms and crossbar.¹⁰ Might viewing this work have challenged and inspired Johns to produce a Crucifixion-themed painting of his own?

If this essay has succeeded in raising as many questions as it answers, then it has fulfilled its purpose. The goal was to invite readers to consider a major work by Rauschenberg that has never been examined and to provide insights into the artist's art and thought and from there into the work's possible meaning. As has been seen, it does not yield its secrets easily. Although *Ace* is a work rich in substance and possibility, replete



16.6 Rauschenberg, *Coexistence*, 1961

Oil on canvas, with fabric, wood, metal and wire, $66\frac{3}{4} \times 49\frac{7}{8} \times 14\frac{1}{4}$ in. (169.5 × 126.7 × 36.2 cm)
 Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond VA; gift of The Sydney and Frances Lewis Foundation
 (Art © Robert Rauschenberg/licensed by VAGA, New York)

with personal innovations and departures and featuring (what was for him) an unprecedented sweep and scope, Rauschenberg was cognizant that the time of assemblage art had passed, as had the period for work painted in so expressionistic and improvisational a manner. Following *Ace* and for the next two years, he devoted himself to his extended series of silk-screen paintings, an art of fixed photographic images, most of them derived from mass-media sources, and relatively restrained paintwork. *Ace* belonged to a transitional moment in his art and life; it stood at the threshold of a wholly new mode of art making and of a new romantic relationship with the eponymous dancer.¹¹

Notes

- 1 With special thanks to Dr Paula Harper of the University of Miami for her time and suggestions for the text of this essay.
- 2 From Marcel Duchamp, *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (*The Green Box*), 1959. This passage was inscribed by Rauschenberg on a scrap of paper collaged onto the surface of *Wager*, 1959; and cited by Jasper Johns as being of particular interest to him in his artist's statement, in Dorothy C. Miller, *Sixteen Americans*, exh. cat., The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1959.
- 3 "Chronology," in Walter Hopps and Susan Davidson, *Robert Rauschenberg: A Retrospective*, exh. cat., Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1997, 560, indicates that in July 1961 Rauschenberg moved from Front Street (where he resided with Johns) to a studio at 809 Broadway. Steve Paxton joined the Merce Cunningham Dance Company in the fall of 1961. *Ace* was first exhibited at the Leo Castelli Gallery, New York, April 7–21, 1962. It may be noted that the five canvas panels Rauschenberg used in *Ace* were originally intended to house radio loud speakers that would operate by remote control from a central cabinet. Rauschenberg grew impatient with delays in the development of the technological components (which were employed in *Oracle*, 1965) and created *Ace* instead. See G[ene].R. Swenson, "Rauschenberg Paints a Picture," *Art News* 62, no. 2 (April 1963), pp. 45–6.
- 4 My reading of Johns's painting was first presented in the lecture "Jasper Johns' *Diver* of 1962: A New Interpretation," delivered in the session "Investigations of Referential Imagery in Modern Art," College Art Association Conference, February 1983. My ideas were reiterated in summary form in "Jasper Johns: The Examined Life," *Art in America* 85, no. 4 (April 1997): 83–4. This article was written in response to Kirk Varnedoe's exhibition *Jasper Johns: A Retrospective* at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1996. With regard to Johns's attraction to the Crucifixion theme, it is interesting to note that the nails used by the performance artist Chris Burden to crucify himself to the roof of a Volkswagen in 1974 are in Johns's collection. See Chris Burden, *Relic from Trans-fixed*, 2 nails in Plexiglas case, 1974.
- 5 Umbrellas in a flattened state appear frequently in the Combines and were used by Rauschenberg to meet a variety of both formal and symbolic ends. As segmented circles, they served as counterparts (of sorts) to Johns's targets. They were also used to refer to wheels, parachutes, and human body parts

- and sex organs. The art critic and poet Frank O'Hara noted in his review of Rauschenberg's show at the Egan Gallery in late 1954, "Reviews and Previews: Bob Rauschenberg," *Art News* 53 (January 1955): 47: "other pieces, including two sex organs (male and female) made from old red silk umbrellas, have a gentle and just passion for moving people." For more on umbrella parts used as sexual symbols in Rauschenberg's art, see Roni Feinstein, "Random Order: The First Fifteen Years of Robert Rauschenberg's Art, 1949–1964," PhD dissertation, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, 1990, 292–4; or my "Rauschenberg: Solutions for a Small Planet," *Art in America* 86, no. 2 (February 1998): 71.
- 6 Rauschenberg's preoccupation with flight during this early part of his career culminated with his *Stoned Moon* series of 33 lithographs, produced after the artist was invited by NASA to visit the Kennedy Space Center on July 17, 1969, to witness the launch of the Apollo 11 spacecraft, an event that resulted in the first successful landing of men on the moon.
 - 7 In the art-historical literature, it has long been commonplace to link Rauschenberg and Johns as major transition figures between Abstract Expressionism and Pop art (by way of Assemblage), the major focus being on their work of 1954–61. Almost countless studies compare and contrast their work and consider questions of influence, among them Feinstein, "Random Order," ch. 5, "Rauschenberg and Johns," 234–69. Unique among these studies and therefore noteworthy is Jonathan Katz's essay, "The Art of Code: Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg," in *Significant Others: Creativity and Intimate Partnership*, ed. Whitney Chadwick and Isabelle de Courtivron (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1993), 189–207.
 - 8 For Johns's use of images from Grünewald's altarpiece, see Jill Johnston, *Jasper Johns: Privileged Information* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1996), ch. 1, "The Grünewald Connection," also 282ff. and esp. 296. Consult also Roberta Bernstein, "Seeing a Thing Can Sometimes Trigger the Mind to Make Another Thing," in Kirk Varnedoe, *Jasper Johns: A Retrospective*, exh. cat., The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1996, 52–4.
 - 9 For the interpretation of *Retroactive I* and *Trapeze* as representing biblical scenes, see Roni Feinstein, *Robert Rauschenberg: The Silkscreen Paintings, 1962–64*, exh. cat., Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1990, 83–4.
 - 10 Rauschenberg identified this object as a saint's tooth relic in J.S., "Is Today's Artist with or without the Past? Rauschenberg," *Art News* 57 (Summer 1958): 56. It may be noted that several paintings in the artist's solo exhibition at the Betty Parsons Gallery, New York, in 1951 alluded to religious themes, among them *Crucifixion and Reflection*, *Trinity*, *Eden*, and *Mother of God*. For more on the paintings and this exhibition, see my "The Unknown Early Rauschenberg: The Betty Parsons Exhibition of 1951," *Arts* 59, no. 5 (January 1985): 126–31; and Walter Hopps, *Robert Rauschenberg: The Early 1950s*, exh. cat., Menil Collection, Houston, 1991.
 - 11 In 2000 Rauschenberg executed the *Ruminations* series of prints at ULAE (Universal Limited Art Editions), which were devoted to important figures and moments from the early period of his life. The intaglio entitled *Ace* (*Steve Paxton*) features three photographic images of Paxton; two capture him midair in jumps, and the third shows him standing with extended arms, a pose that coincidentally resembles a crucifixion.