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Fig. 2. Robert Rauschenberg, Crucifixion and Reflection, c. 1951. *Courtesy Andrew Crispo Gallery.*

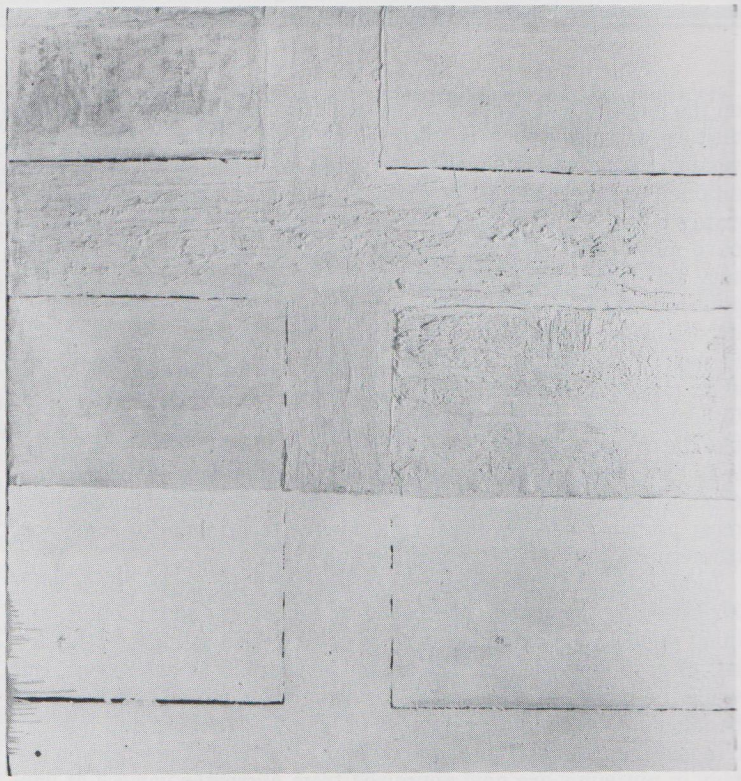
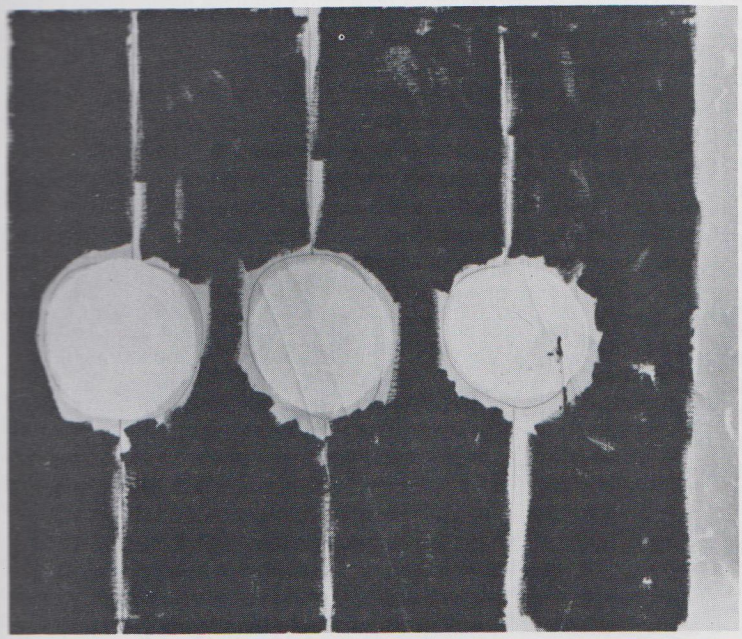


Fig. 1. Robert Rauschenberg, Trinity, c. 1951. *Photo Aaron Siskind. Present whereabouts unknown.*



THE UNKNOWN EARLY ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG: THE BETTY PARSONS EXHIBITION OF 1951

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The Robert Rauschenberg paintings shown in 1951 disclose, among other things, his attraction to symbolic content and his seemingly contradictory literalmindedness, his interest in incorporating objects and materials from the real world, his conception of the canvas as a "flatbed" of information, and his penchant for irony and humor.

Robert Rauschenberg was still taking classes at the Art Students League when he had his first solo show at the Betty Parsons Gallery from May 14 to June 2, 1951. This gallery then represented Pollock, Newman, Rothko, Still, and others. Rauschenberg had walked into the gallery with some of his paintings under his arm several months earlier and Parsons, trusting her instinct, decided to take a chance on this previously unexhibited 26-year-old artist and give him a show. Parsons has said, "I could see right off he was on his own tangent, that he wasn't influenced by anyone else or in the school of anything."[1]

Until very recently, only one painting from the exhibition was widely known and exhibited: *22 The Lily White* (also known as *White Painting with Numbers*, although the former was its original title). Today it is possible to reconstruct the better part of the exhibition; over half of the paintings are known. Several of the works have resurfaced, photographs of others have been rediscovered, while general descriptions of still others may be found in contemporary reviews.[2] The Betty Parsons pictures are a group of remarkable works that reveal a great deal about the artist's origins and the workings of his mind. They disclose, among other things, his attraction to symbolic content and his seemingly contradictory literalmindedness, his interest in incorporating into his work objects and materials from the real world, his conception of the canvas as a "flatbed" of information, and his penchant for irony and humor. As these paintings are of considerable interest and are still largely unknown, a number of them will be discussed in detail. The reception accorded Rauschenberg's Betty Parsons show will then be explored.

Rauschenberg has described the works shown at Betty Parsons as follows:

> These were allegorical cartoons, using abstract forms. They were mostly black, white and yellow. One of them I called *Garden of Eden*, which was like a cartoon series of flower stems, with a circle on top. They were very simpleminded paintings.[3]

The "allegorical cartoons" were works of symbolic content that were rendered in a simple, rather child-like drawing style. The artist's use of the word "cartoon" is telling, as it suggests that these works were intended to embrace a humorous or satiric aspect as well. The announcement Rauschenberg designed for this exhibition was itself a kind of "allegorical cartoon." Printed in orange on a white ground, it consisted of a small arrow which pointed at a tiny dot. This design may be seen as a playful variation on the use of arrows and other emblematic forms in the ideographic pictures of such artists as Newman, Gottlieb, Rothko, and others. Whereas his elders imbued these signs with "tragic and timeless" significance,[4] Rauschenberg interpreted them literally. His announcement presented a flat, informational sign indicating direction and movement.

The paintings that Rauschenberg exhibited at the Betty Parsons Gallery reveal that the branch of New York School abstraction that initially held the greatest appeal for him was Color-Field painting. While studying at the Academy Julian in Paris in 1947, Rauschenberg had been attracted to the expressionist painting style of Matisse and the early Fauves; he had been so excessive in his involvement with the medium of oil paint that he had been painting with his hands. That in New York he responded not to the gestural expressionism of Pollock and de Kooning but to the controlled and impersonal works of Newman and others can probably be explained by the intervention of his formalist training with the former Bauhaus master Josef Albers at Black Mountain College during the 1948-49 academic year. The Betty Parsons pictures owe to Albers in their restrained appearance and in their emphasis upon drawing and line. These paintings are unique in Rauschenberg's oeuvre in that they are his only works to feature drawn line and depicted shape.

Of the works that Rauschenberg exhibited at the Betty Parsons Gallery, about half bore religious titles while the other half were numbered (*Composition 1, 2, 5*, etc.). The religious titles included *Trinity, Crucifixion and Reflection, Garden of Eden, The Man with Two Souls, Mother of God*, and *Pharaoh*. The use of religious titles can perhaps be seen as a reflection of the artist's upbringing. He was raised in Port Arthur, Texas, in a family actively involved in a strict fundamentalist sect within the Church of Christ; he continued to go to church through the early Fifties. Titling works in this manner was also a common practice among artists of the New York School. It found its closest precedent in Barnett Newman whose second exhibition at the Betty Parsons Gallery immediately preceded that of Rauschenberg and included numbered works as well as *Eve, The Voice, The Name, The Way*, and *Joshua*. Rauschenberg's painting *Trinity* (Fig. 1) seems to betray his admiration for both the form and content of the older artist's work. It presents a triad of three radiant white circles intersected by vertical white lines against a tremulous black ground; a vertical yellow bar is to the right. It may be compared to such paintings as Newman's *The Death of Euclid* of 1947. *Trinity* is the only known work from the Betty Parsons exhibition that can be related so directly to the work of his elders; all of the others are more personal and inventive.

The painting *Crucifixion and Reflection* (Fig. 2) presents an iconic image of commanding presence. It is very large, measuring 51 by 47 inches. A large white cross and the beginning of its "reflection," just below, are inscribed slightly off-center upon a heavily textured white ground. Although a relationship to Malevich's Suprematist painting of a white cross against a white ground may be called to mind, Rauschenberg's double cross does not drift but is anchored to the surface; its outlines are both painted on and scratched into the ground and extend to the edges of the canvas so that a figure-ground relationship is denied. Barely visible below the painted surface to the upper left is the title page of a Yiddish newspaper. Its inclusion in this work is hardly accidental. It can, on one level, perhaps be seen as a response to the fact that Rauschenberg, who was brought up in Texas in the Church of Christ, was now living in New York and was being exposed to Jewish people and culture for the first time. Also, Rauschenberg had married a Jewish woman, the artist Susan Weil, during the summer of the previous year. A certain autobiographical content is therefore suggested. On another, more spiritual level, the Church of Christ saw the crucifixion as the fulfillment or "reflection" of the Old Testament, which the Yiddish newspaper may perhaps be taken to symbolize. It may be noted in passing that this monochromatic, single image work, with its underlay of newspaper collage, can be understood to have anticipated the flags and targets of Jasper Johns, begun in 1954.

Rauschenberg's painting *Garden of Eden* (Fig. 3) is of a considerably lighter spirit. It was to this painting that the artist referred when he spoke of the works in the Parsons show as "allegorical cartoons." It consists of two horizontal rows of flower-like (or lollipop) forms scribbled against a white ground. All are black except for one in the top row which is red, which seems to serve as a reference to the "forbidden fruit." At the sides of the painting, mattress ticking can be seen curling to the left and right. This material, which seems to have served as the support for the painting, may carry iconographic significance as well, as a bed would be an appropriate support for a painting that takes as its subject the "forbidden fruit" of sexuality. If *Eden*, like *Crucifixion and Reflection*, betrays the artist's interest in symbolic subject matter, his was not the transcendental content of the Color-Field painters but was something more literal, personal, and even comic. Rauschenberg's art was geared to the material world.

The introduction of mattress ticking into *Garden of Eden* looked ahead to Rauschenberg's later work. One of the artist's continuing interests was to challenge conventions regarding canvas as the appropriate support for painted works. Although his use of materials other than canvas for his supports was perhaps in part reflective of his impoverished circumstances of the time, the fact that the unconventional support of *Eden* was not only exposed but flaunted reveals his eagerness to "go against the grain." Further, mattress ticking, or bedsheets and pillows with the characteristic stripes of mattress ticking, were to be among his favorite materials, recurring in his art several times in the next few years, most notably in *Satellite* and *Bed*, both of 1955.[5]

Among the numbered paintings included in the Betty Parsons exhibition is a work which is today in the artist's collection (Fig. 4). It presents a large, flatly painted white circle set above a similarly painted white rectangle which extends across the bottom of the canvas. The background of the painting is formed by a collage of roadmaps of American cities arranged in grid-like fashion (Buffalo, Denver, Boston, St. Louis, and San Antonio are among the cities represented). To the lower right, on the horizontal band, is a quotation clipped from a newspaper which reads:

> "An invaluable spiritual roadmap . . . as simple and fundamental as life itself." –*Catholic Review*

Although Rauschenberg's painting resembles nothing so much as an Adolph Gottlieb "Burst," Gottlieb did not begin this series of paintings until 1957. His *Frozen Sounds, Number 1* of 1951, which anticipated the "Bursts," was not exhibited until 1953. Rauschenberg's painting may nevertheless be seen as his personal interpretation of ideas expressed in the spiritually oriented work of Rothko, Newman, and other Color-Field painters. Once again, he transformed the principles involved in their art into something very literal. Rather than presenting a "mythic orb" floating against the "universal void," he offered a flatly painted circle set against a grid of roadmaps. The specificity of place asserted by the roadmaps cancels the effect of infinity and the sense of boundlessness sought by his elders. Similarly, the quotation clipped from the newspaper negates all intimations of the sublime by flatly spelling out his (supposed) intentions.

It is difficult to know with what degree of seriousness the artist approached this work at the time it was created. It is tempting to think that it was intended to serve as a mocking reference to the work of his elders; that Rauschenberg sought to "demythify" Color-Field painting by collapsing its symbolic spaces and deflating its spiritual intentions. The existence of such works as *Trinity*, which seems to have been painted in sincere emulation of Color-Field painting, argues against this interpretation. The use of the term "spiritual roadmap" in this untitled work, however, seems to work in its favor; it echoes his notion of the "allegorical cartoon." Both phrases represent a conjoining of the banal (cartoons and roadmaps) with the elevated and sublime (allegory and spirituality), providing yet another note of irony. Whatever the artist's original intentions might have been, Rauschenberg's untitled painting is revealing in a number of ways. It demonstrates, once again, his literalmindedness, his interest in locating his work – in both its subject matter and materials – in the real world (and, as is significant to his later art, in America), and his emphatic non-illusionism.

22 The Lily White (Fig. 5) also seems to offer a critique of contemporary trends. In this work, an all-over, maze-like design is scratched into a heavily textured white ground with a lead pencil; touches of gray and of a golden tone are also seen. Incised within the fretted-key pattern of boxes are numbers, the words "FREE" and "OUT," the initials "L.B.," and the painting's title. These inscriptions are oriented in different directions, causing some uncertainty as to

Fig. 3. Robert Rauschenberg, Garden of Eden, c. 1951. *Photo Aaron Siskind. Present whereabouts unknown.*

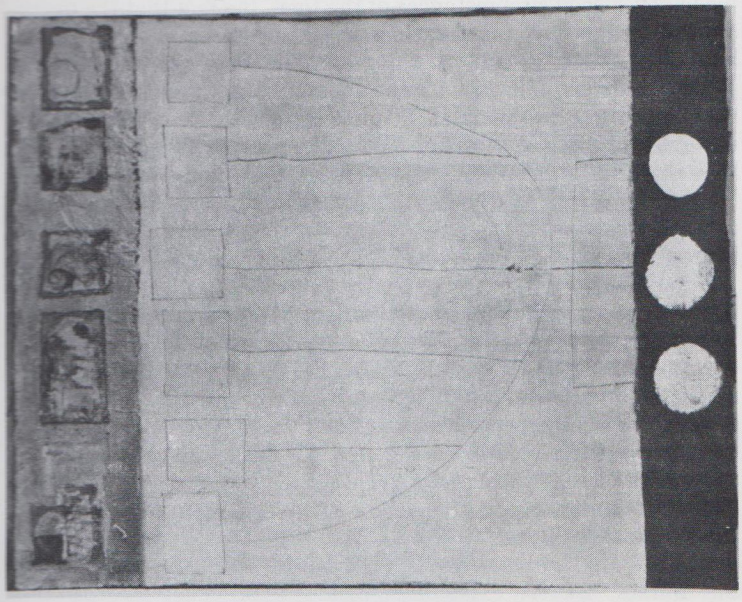

Fig. 6. Robert Rauschenberg, Stone, Stone, Stone, c. 1951. *Photo Aaron Siskind. Present whereabouts unknown.*

which way is up, which is further confused by a switching in the pattern of the boxes near the bottom edge. It appears to be the board of some unknown game. It has been suggested that the painting may be related to Loren McIver's *Hopscotch* of 1940, which was then a well-known painting in the Museum of Modern Art.[6]

Rauschenberg's painting, however, seems to be his personal version of a pictograph, the works of this type by Torres-Garcia, Gottlieb, and others being highly visible on the New York scene. A memorial exhibition for Torres-Garcia, for example, was held at the Sidney Janis Gallery (then across the hall from Betty Parsons) in April of 1950. It featured this artist's often monochromatic, grid-like compositions which contained numbers, words, stars, and other symbols and signs. Rauschenberg seems to have transformed the Surrealist-inspired, free associative pictographs of his elders into something at once more literal and personal – into a hopscotch court or gameboard filled with seemingly nonsensical numbers and private childhood memories (the painting's title derives from the line of a song he remembered from his childhood in Port Arthur).[7]

Rauschenberg's seeming transmutation of the pictograph into a gameboard was not the only ironic note in this work. The red star which appears at the lower right corner was not intended to be seen as a "universal symbol." Although it might also suggest the red stars that a teacher might put on a child's report card or well-executed mathematics exercise, the artist has said that it was intended as an allusion to the red stars used in galleries to indicate when a painting has been sold (in actuality, red dots are generally used).[8] That Rauschenberg's intention was to comment upon art sales and ownership is reinforced by the recurrence of a miniature version of the *Lily White* maze in the work entitled *Stone, Stone, Stone*. Inscribed upon this tiny maze are the words "Sell for Nothing."

The primary image in *Stone, Stone, Stone* (Fig. 6) is a chart or diagram that has been drawn with a wavering, child-like line, but nevertheless seems to suggest that the painting is to be understood as holding some sort of information, however indecipherable it might be. This "chart" spans the surface of the work and connects the two very different activities which take place at its extreme left and right sides – geometric abstraction to the right and collage to the left. To the right are three circles set against a black ground; the two on the bottom were formed with white paint while the one at the top is a mirror. To the left, beside six awkwardly drawn squares which are part of the original "chart," is a vertical column consisting of five or six boxes that have been variously collaged and painted with silver paint. The collage elements include hair, a scrap of paper inscribed with a row of five-digit numbers, a postage stamp, a small illustration of a bird on a perch, the letter "A," and the tiny *Lily White*-like maze. Many of these materials are to recur in his art; birds, letters, and sheets of paper scribbled with numbers play a significant role in the Combines.

While looking ahead to his later work, the collage in this painting reaches back to his study with Josef Albers. One of Albers' aims as a teacher was to sensitize his students to the inherent properties of a wide range of found objects and materials so as to enhance their personal sense of looking. Although the collage in this painting may seem to suggest an awareness of Schwitters, Rauschenberg was not yet familiar with Schwitters' art. His "discovery" of Schwitters is clearly manifested in his Red Paintings of 1953-55.[9] Collage was, of course, by no means unknown in New York in the early Fifties. Motherwell, Marca Relli, de Kooning, Kline, and others all worked in collage. From the time of his earliest work in this medium, however, Rauschenberg's collages were extremely personal, both in terms of his choice of materials and in his exploitation of their content, as will shortly be seen.

Strongly related to *Stone, Stone, Stone* is *Composition I* (Fig. 7), which also includes a series of boxes filled with collage. Five squares are isolated near the top edge of a white grounded canvas. The two other squares are connected by a linear framework which resembles a candelabra. A small rectangular mirror is on its stem. The square to the upper left is painted black. The one beside it is gray (it is not painted this color but is simply the color of the underpainting which runs below the entire composition). The next square is white and undifferentiated from the rest of the "overpainting" except that its outlines have been dug into the surface with a lead pencil; a yellow circle has been painted in its center. The square beside it is filled with graffiti and newspaper collage. The graffiti consists mainly of a random sequence of numbers and the words "Fuck," "Margot," "Count," and "Ball." Among the newspaper clippings are headlines reading "The World: Still in Crisis," "The Nation: Price War," "The Three and the One," and "Muddled Picture." The latter, which was taken from an article about television, can probably be understood as a mocking reference to his own art. "The Three and the One," which derived from a story about the Big Four foreign ministers, was perhaps intended as an allusion to the Holy Trinity. The final square is painted half blue and half green and is collaged over with thin sheets of tissue or toilet paper pasted in a rectilinear design. Rauschenberg's subtle differentiation of the five squares and his use of the written word in the newspaper headlines and grafitti reveal his interest in provoking the spectator to read and scrutinize his paintings' surfaces.

This is most clearly seen in *Should Love Come First?* (Fig. 8), the most revealing and forward-looking of all the Betty Parsons pictures. It is a medium-sized work in which collage materials are organized in a rectilinear pattern against a white ground. It includes several painted passages as well and is of a dominant pink tonality. The painting incorporates a large diagram of about two hundred clocks (labeled "A Diagram: Estimating the differences of time between the places shown and Washington"), the inked impression of a foot, a tiny reproduction of a Monet painting of the cliffs at Etretat, a diagram of a dance movement, and a question cut out of a magazine (probably a "women's magazine") which reads, "my problem . . . Should love come first?" At the top center is the right half of yet another tiny maze, several of whose boxes are occupied by the number "8"; what would have been the left half is thickly covered over with paint.

This work consists of signs and printed matter of varying sorts which have been selected and juxtaposed so as to form clusters of meaning. The shoeprints in the dance step diagram are numbered 1 through 6; the number 7 is collaged twice in the lower left corner of the page with the clock diagram which is itself numbered 8 at its upper right; and the number 8 is then repeated several times within the *Lily White*-like maze. This progression of numbers encourages reading across the work and, at the same time, serves to integrate the disparate collaged elements. The question posed by the magazine cutout, which also serves as the painting's title, suggests sexuality on the one hand and the passage of time or sequentiality on the

other. The series of numbers 1 through 8 relates to the latter as do the two hundred some-odd clocks. Patterns of movement, which also involve sequentiality, are indicated by the dance steps diagram, the hopscotch-like maze, and the implied circular motion of the clocks. Sexuality enters the work in the form of the artist's footprint which bears a strong resemblance to a phallus, an interpretation reinforced by the fact that it points directly at the orifice in the Monet cliffscape. The erotic nature of the Etretat rock formation has long been recognized by the French who have nicknamed it "La Porte de Dame."[10] The pink tonality of this work is also appropriate to the subject of love. It may be noted that Susan Weil was pregnant at the time of the Betty Parsons exhibition; their son Christopher was born in June.

Movement, the passage of time, and sexuality are all to be important themes in Rauschenberg's art. Also extremely significant in this work is his playing with jumps in scale, as seen in the manner in which the footprint, which establishes human scale (and the artist's presence), is abruptly contrasted with the tiny shoeprints in the dance steps diagram. The idea of stepping on the work and the shift of orientation it implies – from the horizontal to the vertical and vice versa – recall Leo Steinberg's discussion of Rauschenberg and the "flatbed" picture plane in his article "Other Criteria," first published in *Artforum* in 1972.[11] Steinberg wrote that the implied shift of the picture plane seen in Rauschenberg's art was "expressive of the most radical shift in the subject matter of art, the shift from nature to culture."[12] Rauschenberg, he explained, was responsible for having introduced the idea of the canvas as a literally flat surface filled with information rather than as an illusionistic field of figuration or expressive utterance. Rauschenberg's preoccupation with charts, diagrams, and tables of information of various kinds, his use of mass-produced and mechanically reproduced images, and his concern with language and verbal cues, as seen in his use of newspaper headlines and in his inscribing words and phrases upon the surfaces of his paintings, may all be seen as an extension of his interest in ideas, facts, and American experience. Steinberg prophetically identified the "flatbed" picture plane as a hallmark of Post-Modernism[13]; Rauschenberg's eclecticism, impurity, use of appropriated images and materials, and focus upon the culture may all be understood to have set the stage for more recent art.

Although *Should Love Come First?* is known to have been present at the Betty Parsons Gallery at the time of the exhibition, it appears not to have been included in the show. Perhaps it was because of all the works by Rauschenberg dating to this time, this was the most personal, the painting at the furthest remove from currents then active on the New York scene. When Thomas Hess reproduced *Stone, Stone, Stone* in the *Art News Annual* of 1956, he captioned it "A free variant on New York abstractions." *Crucifixion and Reflection, 22 The Lily White*, the "Burst"-like painting, and others could all have been similarly described. Although each was, in its own way, extremely inventive, and although several seem to have been executed as critiques of contemporary trends, they were all sufficiently tied to these trends to have a "look" that was then not unfamiliar on the New York scene. Only *Should Love Come First?* stood conspicuously apart. With its multi-part structure and its invitation to the spectator to engage in discourse,[14] this painting, more than any other in the Betty Parsons show, looked ahead to the artist's mature aesthetic as it was to emerge in the Combines. It may be noted that after this work, Rauschenberg's interest in the ideas and thought processes evoked by the subject matter of his collage materials was to be held in abeyance for the next several years. It was to disappear with the White and Black Paintings, to reappear submerged under washes of paint in the Red Paintings, and to resurface with the Combines.

The reviews Rauschenberg received for the Betty Parsons show were not unfavorable. Mary Cole, writing in *Art Digest*, described several of the works and noted that a symbolic subject matter was indicated by some of the titles.[15] In *Art News* Dorothy Seckler spoke of the artist's "whimsical geometry" and "whispy calligraphy," and said that in certain works collage was introduced "either to provide textural effects . . . or to suggest a very tenuous associational content."[16] Stuart Preston of *The New York Times* was more critical. He wrote:

> There is nothing niggardly in Bob Rauschenberg's power to invent. His works at the Betty Parsons Gallery introduce bits of looking glass, stylish doodles in black and white, and liberal helpings of silver paint. The fact that his pictures seem to be the spawning ground for ideas rather than finished conceptions give them a restless look. Most composed and successful are the semi-geometrically planned oils . . . .[17]

If the critical response to his first solo show was somewhat less than enthusiastic, the exhibition nevertheless provided him with an effective introduction to the New York scene. Rauschenberg was apparently well received by artists, as it was on the basis of this exhibition that Jack Tworkov and Leo Castelli invited him to participate in the concurrent Ninth Street Show, an artist-organized exhibition sponsored by the then gallery-less Leo Castelli.[18] This exhibition featured the work of almost all of the first generation Abstract Expressionists as well as that of several younger artists. At the end of 1951, Rauschenberg was invited to join The Club, a year before most of the other artists of his generation.[19] From this point on, he was to be included in almost all New York School activities that admitted members of the "second generation."

It was also as a result of the Betty Parsons show that Rauschenberg met John Cage for the first time. Cage apparently went over to Rauschenberg in the gallery, introduced himself, and said that he liked the paintings very much; Rauschenberg, knowing only vaguely who he was, gave him one. It was a rather fetishistic work that consisted of a hand outline, a leaf from a fortune teller's notebook, and a black arrow on a silver background. About a year and a half later, in order to thank Cage for the use of his loft while the composer was out of town, Rauschenberg painted over this work with black paint, transforming it into a Black Painting, the series with which he was then involved.

The work Rauschenberg exhibited at Betty Parsons was that of an ambitious young artist in his mid-twenties. It was the work of a highly creative, restless, and curious individual who was already, as Betty Parsons said, "off on his own tangent." He was new to the New York scene and was looking at and responding to what he saw going on around him as well as to what he learned from his teacher Josef Albers. He absorbed influences and at the same time transformed them into something very much his own, according to the dictates of his ironic and playful sensibility and of his extremely literal and object-oriented mind. These paintings were but a prelude. Other sources were still to be confronted and transformed and his art had

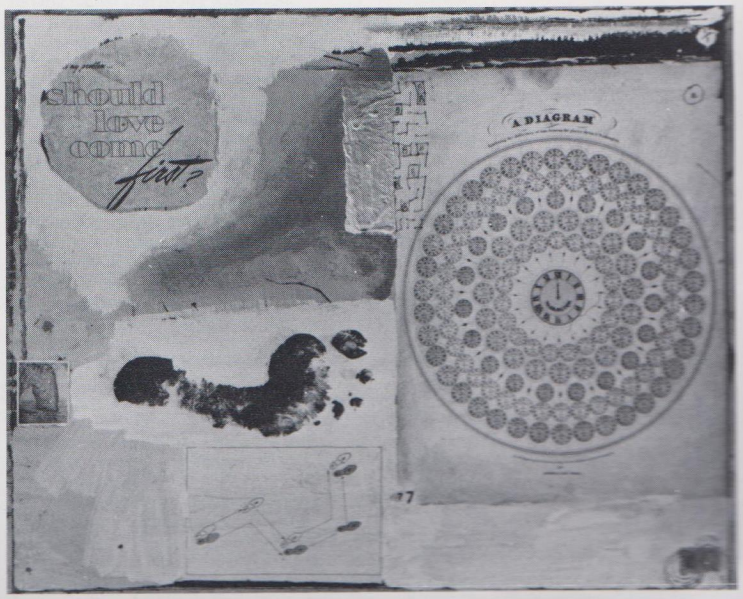

Fig. 8. Robert Rauschenberg, Should Love Come First?, c. 1951. *Photo Aaron Siskind. Present whereabouts unknown.*

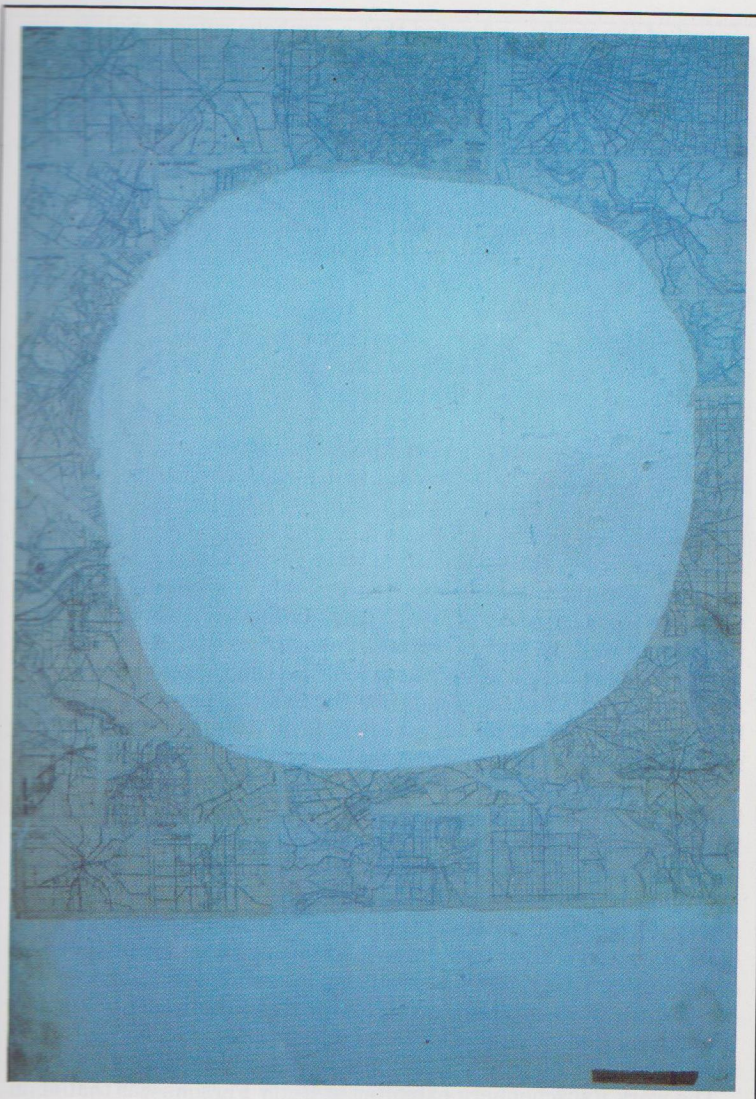

Fig. 4. Robert Rauschenberg, Untitled, c. 1951. *Collection of the artist.*

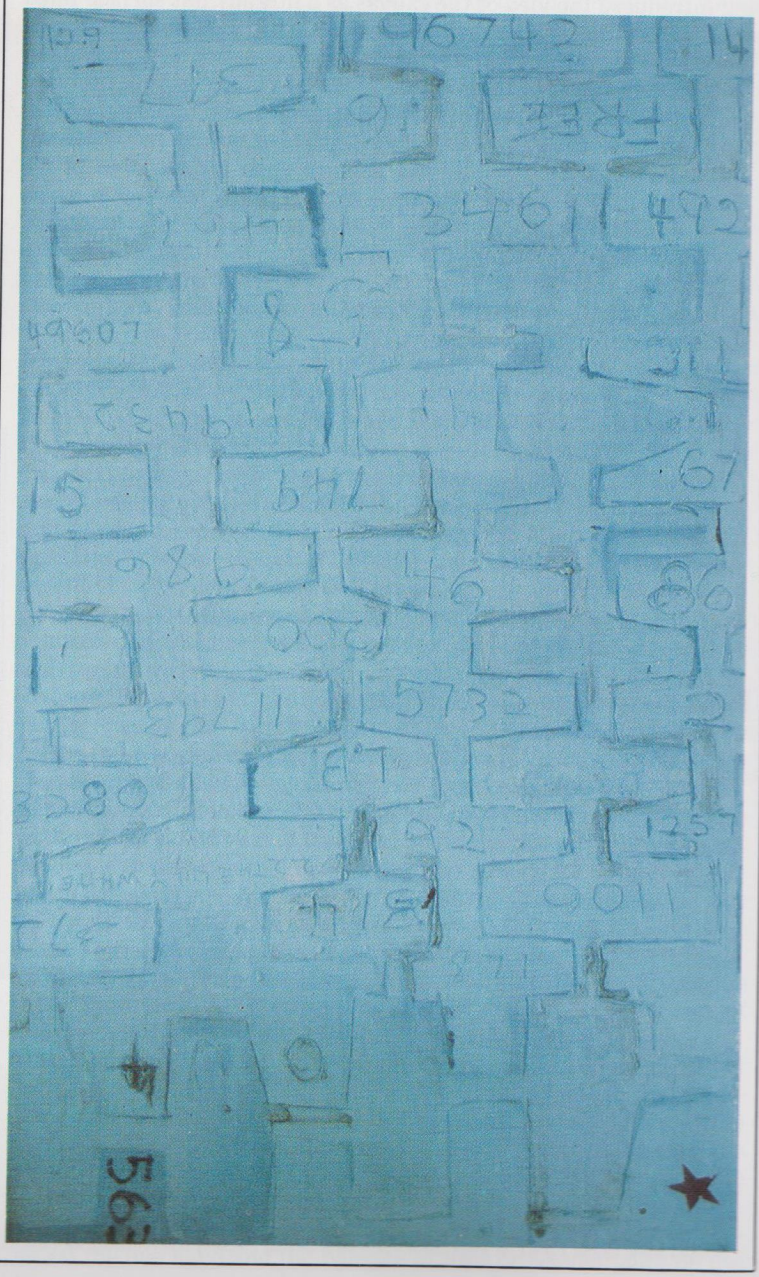

Fig. 5. Robert Rauschenberg, The Lily White, c. 1951. *Private Collection.*

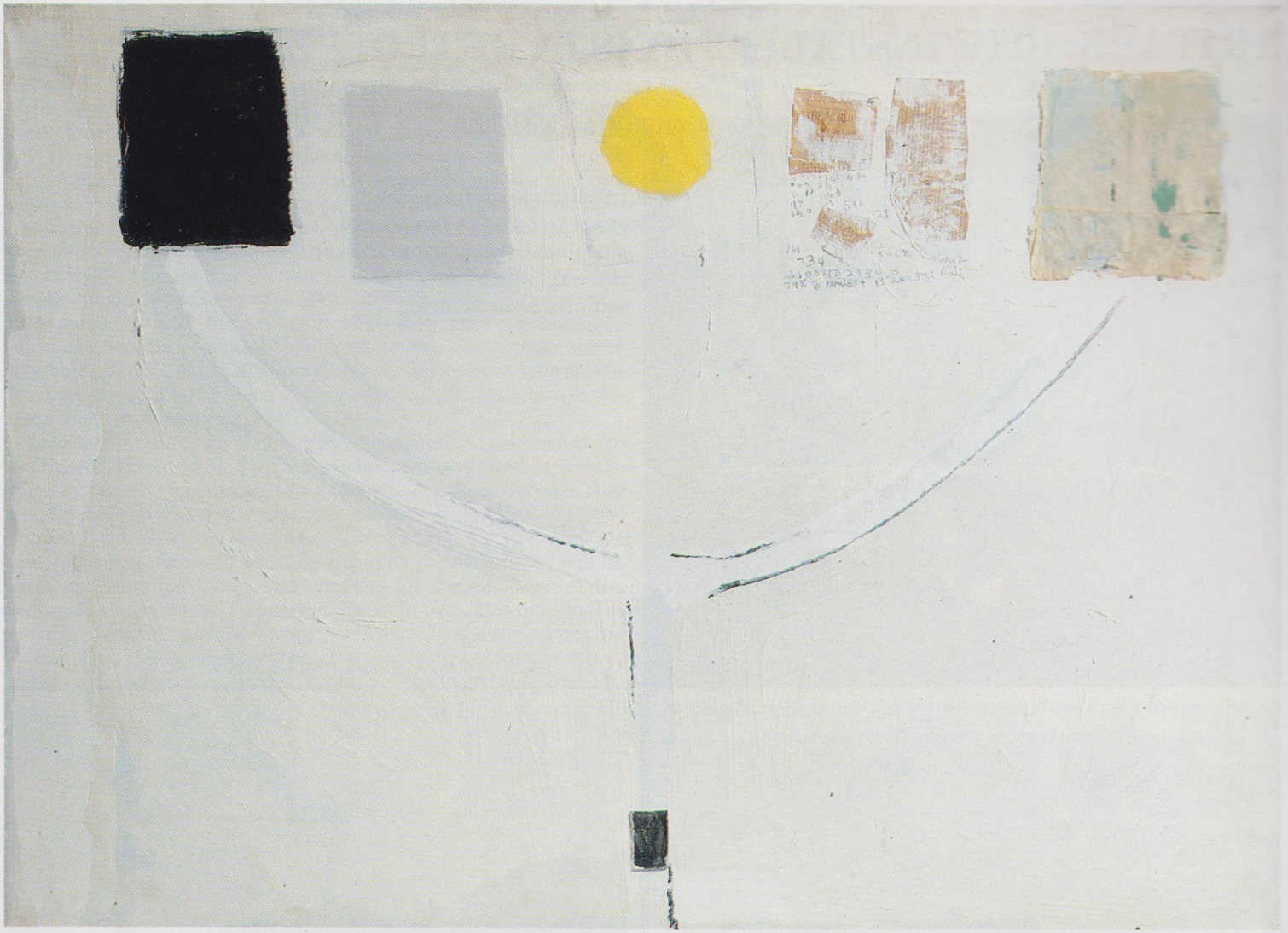

Fig. 7. Robert Rauschenberg, Composition I, c. 1951. *Private Collection, Vancouver.*

yet to acquire its characteristic multiplicity, physicality, and sensuality. The seeds of his later art, however, were already there; they needed only to develop and grow until they found their ultimate expression in his mature work – the Combines.

1. Calvin Tomkins, *Off the Wall* (New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1980), p. 62.
2. It was formerly believed that with the exception of *22 The Lily White*, all of the other works from this show had perished in a fire at Susan Weil's parents' home on Outer Island, Connecticut. *Crucifixion and Reflection*, however, was in the collection of the artist Sari Dienes since shortly after the Betty Parsons exhibition. The artist Knox Martin was in possession of several of the paintings (among them the "Burst"-like painting and *Composition I*), as Rauschenberg had apparently stored them in Martin's studio during the summer of 1951 and then forgot about them. These works were recovered a few years ago when Martin sold them back to Rauschenberg and Leo Castelli. (The Hirshhorn Museum's *Basketball Court* had also been in Martin's possession.) *Trinity, Garden of Eden, Stone, Stone, Stone*, and *Should Love Come First?* are all known from photographs that were taken for the Betty Parsons Gallery by Aaron Siskind at the time of the exhibition. A photograph of still another work, a painting which appears to consist mainly of an arrow and a dot (like the show's announcement), is in the artist's possession.
3. "Robert Rauschenberg: An Audience of One", *Art News* LXXVI, February 1977, p. 46.
4. In a statement prepared for "The Ideographic Picture" exhibition which was held at the Betty Parsons Gallery in 1947 and which included the work of Still, Rothko, Stamos, Hofmann, and others. Newman, the show's coordinator, explained that these artists introduced arrows, signs, and abstract forms into their work in order to make contact with "mystery – of life, of men, of nature, of the hard, black chaos that is death, or the grayer, softer chaos that is tragedy."
5. This material came to be so closely associated with Rauschenberg that both Allan Kaprow and Elaine Sturtevant incorporated mattress ticking into works executed in homage to the artist (Kaprow in *Grandma's Boy* and Sturtevant in an untitled work in the collection of B.H. Friedman).
6. Robert Pincus-Witten suggested this in his "Johns/Rauschenberg" seminar taught at the Graduate Center of The City University of New York during spring 1980, as did Robert Rosenblum during an interview with the present writer on November 17, 1982.
7. The song, which was probably a hymn, was "Green Grow the Rushes O." It may be noted that Rauschenberg was not the only one to equate pictographs with gameboard structures. Thomas Hess in *Abstract Art* (New York: Viking Press, 1951), p. 125, spoke of the manner in which Adolph Gottlieb divided his compositions into "elaborate tic-tac-toe compartments – derived from Indian pictographs."
8. Tomkins, *op. cit.*, p. 53.
9. Rauschenberg's use of an expanded range of collage materials in his Red Paintings was probably due to his having seen a large number of Schwitters' works in the exhibition "Dada 1916-1923," held at the Sidney Janis Gallery, April 15-May 9, 1953.
10. The writer is indebted to Professor Kirk Varnedoe of the Institute of Fine Arts for having called this to her attention.
11. Leo Steinberg, "Reflections on the State of Art Criticism," *Artforum*, X (March, 1972), pp. 37-49; reprinted under the title "Other Criteria" in Steinberg's book *Other Criteria* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 55-91. Steinberg derived the concept of the "flatbed" from the flatbed printing press – a horizontal bed which supports a flat printed surface. It may be noted that the shift in orientation indicated by Steinberg was also seen in Rauschenberg's use of mattress ticking, something associated with horizontality and lying down, as the support for *Garden of Eden*.
12. Steinberg, *Other Criteria*, p. 84.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
14. Rosalind Krauss, in "Rauschenberg and the Materialized Image," *Artforum*, XIII (December 1974), pp. 36-43, explained that the part-by-part, image-by-image structure of the Combines simulated language and caused the viewer to engage in "discourse" with the work. Unlike the present writer, however, Krauss felt that although there was a high degree of plausibility in the manner in which objects and images were juxtaposed, ". . . this plausibility is not to be explained by any kind of formal logic that might pertain to them as elements in a design, or any kind of narrative connection between them."
15. Mary Cole, "Fifty-Seventh Street Review," *Art Digest*, June 1, 1951, p. 18.
16. Dorothy Seckler, "Exhibition at Betty Parsons' Gallery," *Art News*, May 1951, p. 59.
17. Stuart Preston, "Robert Rauschenberg," *The New York Times*, May 18, 1951. *Trinity*, a "semi-geometrically planned oil," may have numbered among the works preferred by Preston.
18. Rauschenberg withdrew *22 The Lily White* from the Betty Parsons show to exhibit it on Ninth Street.
19. Helen Frankenthaler and Alfred Leslie were also included in the Ninth Street Show. Frankenthaler was invited to join The Club at the same time as Rauschenberg; Leslie, Larry Rivers, Joan Mitchell, Grace Hartigan, and Paul Brach joined a year later. It may be noted that Rauschenberg was among the first artists of his generation to have a solo show. Frankenthaler, Leslie, and Goodnough, all of whom showed at the Tibor de Nagy Gallery, had their first one-person shows during the fall or winter of 1951-52.