

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Robert Rauschenberg
Spreads and Scales
530 West 21st Street
May 3 – June 17, 2023

Gladstone is pleased to present an exhibition of *Spreads and Scales* by Robert Rauschenberg, the first show to highlight these related series in New York for more than 40 years. The layered, multidimensional wall-mounted and sculptural forms from these important bodies of work, made between 1975 and 1983, demonstrate the artist's unparalleled ability to expand the artistic possibilities of recognizable, everyday objects by ingeniously juxtaposing and combining forms in space.

Rauschenberg's work has resisted simple categorization since the beginning of his career, pushing against the boundaries of what is possible through art. When he began making work in the late 1940s, many of his peers were employing the visual language of Abstract Expressionism. Rauschenberg, however, was guided by an ideology wherein art and the realities of life intersected, which allowed him to connect previously distinctive modalities of artmaking into single forms and astonishing bodies of work. His aptly titled Combines (1954-64), which brought together real-world objects and abstract painting, portrayed this sentiment with piercing clarity, and helped him gain the reputation as one of the most inventive, forward-thinking artists of his generation.

Rauschenberg's seemingly instinctual ability to connect images, forms, and mediums carried throughout his career, and is powerfully demonstrated through his *Spreads and Scales*. The *Spreads* (1975-1983) are large-scale, wall mounted works with protruding three dimensional elements. The title implies a wide expanse of land as well as a fabric covering. The sometimes freestanding *Scales* (1977-1981) expand upon this idea to incorporate large found objects into, alongside, or on top of surfaces covered in transposed imagery. The two series shown together demonstrate the uniqueness of Rauschenberg's vision and approach to experimentation across a variety of chosen mediums.

By the time he began making the *Spreads and Scales*, there had been many significant developments in Rauschenberg's life that had major influences on his artistic approach. Early studies at Black Mountain College where he first developed an interest in photography, travels with artists like Cy Twombly, his move to New York and then subsequent relocation to Captiva Island in Florida, as well as collaborations with printmakers, engineers and choreographers all contributed to his singular style and uncategorizable oeuvre.

The beginning of these new series, paired with this culmination of experiences and experiments, coincided with the opening of a significant mid-career retrospective in 1976 at the National Collection of Fine Arts, now the Smithsonian American Art Museum, in Washington, D.C., which allowed Rauschenberg an opportunity to look back at years of important early work. The impact of this opportunity would forever change his practice; it allowed him to revisit what he had accomplished and opened the way for new possibilities from this point forward. Expanding upon the conceptual framework of his Combines, the *Spreads and Scales* merge his arsenal of ideas and the technical prowess at this critical juncture to form works that teeter between paintings, sculptures, and photographs, masterfully demonstrating the artist's unquestionable inventiveness throughout his life that continues to inspire artists working today.

A fully illustrated catalog with an essay by Nancy Spector accompanies the exhibition.

For further information, please contact press@gladstonegallery.com
New York gallery hours: Tuesday–Saturday, 10am–6pm
Brussels gallery hours: Tuesday–Friday, 10am–6pm and Saturday, 12pm–6pm