



Empire I, 1961

HESS COMMEMORATES RAUSCHENBERG WITH SHOW OF IMPORTANT WORKS MOUNT VEEDER-NAPA VALLEY, CALIFORNIA (SEPTEMBER 15, 2008)

Napa Valley vintner and international art collector Donald Hess delves into his private reserves of art to exhibit rarely seen works by the late American master Robert Rauschenberg. As a tribute to Rauschenberg, who died in May at age 82, Hess brings several Rauschenberg pieces from his personal collection in Berne for viewing at the art museum at his Napa Valley mountain winery, The Hess Collection.

The commemorative Rauschenberg exhibit at the art museum at The Hess Collection is one of the first important surveys of the artist's work since his death and includes a significant piece, "Empire I", 1961, that was part of a major Rauschenberg retrospective in 1997 at New York's Guggenheim Museum. Rauschenberg, noted as one of the most influential artists of the 20th century, is generally credited with bridging mid-century abstract expressionism to the more free-wheeling pop art movement of the 1960s. He was among the first to popularize incorporating ordinary objects into three-dimensional multi-media artworks.

Noted art critic Robert Hughes once described Rauschenberg as "a protean genius who showed America that all of life could be open to art." But Rauschenberg never rested on his laurels and throughout his career jumped categories to try new challenges. He made window displays for Tiffany's, produced costumes and sets for ballet masters Merce Cunningham and Paul Taylor, helped create the first art "happening" with avant garde composer John Cage and won a Grammy award for the 1983 album cover he designed for New Wave pop group, Talking Heads. Rauschenberg also became the first American artist to win the coveted grand prize at the Venice Biennale.

The seven works to be displayed at the art museum at The Hess Collection span Rauschenberg's varied output from the early 1950s through the late 1990s. Included is an important piece from the *Urban Bourbon Series*, "Tabernacle Fuss", 1992.

Donald Hess was drawn to Rauschenberg "because of his tremendous integrity as an artist." Hess continues, "His work exudes the passion Rauschenberg felt for making art and discovering new modes of expression. Furthermore, he related to his incessant search for a challenge and was amazed by his innate ability to arrange ordinary objects in a way that looks so effortless and poetic. Rauschenberg was a master at making the complicated simple."

The Rauschenberg exhibit begins August 30th at The Hess Collection and the works will remain indefinitely as part of the permanent exhibit. The art museum at The Hess Collection and Visitor Center is open from 10:00 am to 5:30 pm. For more information, please contact Museum Curator, Robert Ceballos at 707-255-1144.

The Hess Collection on Mount Veeder produces distinctive estate-grown Napa Valley wines acclaimed for their complexity, structure and elegance. The mountain winery is a leader in sustainable and organic practices across its 310 vineyards acres on Mount Veeder and single vineyard designates in the Napa Valley. The historic winery has earned international recognition for its wine, culinary and visitor programs and provides free public access to Donald Hess' extensive private contemporary art museum. Fine wines of The Hess Family include Artein (California), Peter Lehmann Wines (Australia), Glen Carlou (South Africa) and Colomé (Argentina). The South African and Argentinean wineries also exhibit major pieces from the Hess Art Collection in their museums: Glen Carlou is showing Deryck Healey, Ouattara Watts and Andy Goldsworthy; Colomé will inaugurate the first James Turrell museum in the world in 2009.