

# WHITNEY

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## Press Release

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### ***ARTISTS MAKING PHOTOGRAPHS TO OPEN AT THE WHITNEY***



Robert Rauschenberg (1925–2008), *CY + RELICS—Rome*, 1952. Gelatin silver print, 14 15/16 x 14 15/16 in. (37.9 x 37.9 cm).  
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; gift of the artist and Pace/MacGill Gallery 93.57.

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New York, December 31, 2008 -- *Artists Making Photographs* focuses on five major artists from the Whitney's collection – John Chamberlain, Robert Rauschenberg, Lucas Samaras, Ed Ruscha, and Andy Warhol – all of whom are best known for their work in sculpture and painting, although they have each made significant works with a camera as well. The exhibition, in the Sondra Gilman Gallery, opens January 16, 2009; it is organized by Elisabeth Sussman, Whitney curator and Sondra Gilman Curator of Photography.

The pioneer of the group is Robert Rauschenberg (1925–2008), who exhibited passionate interest in both painting and photography from the beginning of his career. He first studied photography at Black Mountain College in the early 1950s.

In 1951 he stated that he would photograph the U.S. "inch by inch," attesting to his investment in the medium. The following year he traveled to Rome, where he made numerous photographs, including one of fellow artist Cy Twombly, which is on view in the show. Rauschenberg's large-scale black painting, with its multi-panel construction and textural ground of newspaper collage, provides further evidence of the artist's dedication to radical experimentation.

Rauschenberg's enthusiastic embrace of photography initiated a range of experiments over the next two decades. Aware of Rauschenberg's work, Andy Warhol (1928-1987) explored photography in the mid-1960s. Warhol, however, sent his subjects into a photo booth rather than composing and taking their portraits himself. The process and aesthetic of mechanical reproduction would become integral to Warhol's work in the ensuing years, represented here by *Nine Jackies* with its repetition of appropriated photographic images of Jacqueline Kennedy taken at the time of her husband's assassination. With this new style, Warhol initiated the genre of photo-based history painting that continues to be explored by artists today.

The paintings and drawings of Ed Ruscha (b. 1937) similarly seize upon iconic images of American culture. With the recent discovery of his extensive body of photography, it now appears that Ruscha's ability to capture an image and create a mood derives, in part, from the focus provided by the experience of using a camera. The exhibition includes a sampling of the many themes that occur in his work across mediums. For instance, a self-portrait with a black eye finds poetic echoes not only in the "portrait" drawing of a familiar anti-nausea medication, but also in the medium of its execution: gunpowder.

John Chamberlain (b. 1927) and Lucas Samaras (b. 1936) are two artists who began to explore the possibilities of photography in the 1970s. Chamberlain's abstract photograph of distorted planes of color recalls his welded sculpture of fragments of car parts. Samaras's insertion of his body into decorative fields and his fluid manipulations of photographic emulsions parallel the surrealistic contortions of his laboriously crafted yarn and plaster chair.

## **About the Whitney**

The Whitney Museum of American Art is the leading advocate of 20th- and 21st-century American art. Founded in 1930, the Museum is regarded as the preeminent collection of American art and includes major works and materials from the estate of Edward Hopper, the largest public collection of works by Alexander Calder, as well as significant works by Jasper Johns, Donald Judd, Agnes Martin, Bruce Nauman, Georgia O'Keeffe, Claes Oldenburg, Kiki Smith, and Andy Warhol, among other artists. With its history of exhibiting the most promising and influential American artists and provoking intense critical and public debate, the Whitney's signature show, the Biennial, has become the most important survey of the state of contemporary art in America today. First housed on West 8th Street, the Whitney relocated in 1954 to West 54th Street and in 1966 inaugurated its present home at 945 Madison Avenue, designed by Marcel Breuer. The Whitney is currently moving ahead with plans to build a second facility, designed by Renzo Piano, located in downtown New York at the entrance to the High Line in the Meatpacking District.

### **Current and Upcoming Exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art:**

"Progress"	Through January 4, 2009
Between the Still and Moving Image	Through January 4, 2009
Corin Hewitt: Seed Stage	Through January 4, 2009
Signs of the Time	Through January 11, 2009
Alex Bag	Opens January 9, 2009
Artists Making Photographs	Opens January 16, 2009
Synthetic	Opens January 22, 2009
Elad Lassry: Three Films	Opens January 22, 2009
William Eggleston	Through January 25, 2009
Alexander Calder: The Paris Years	Through February 15, 2009
Sites	Opens February 19, 2009
Jenny Holzer	March 12, 2009-May 31, 2009
Dan Graham: Beyond	Opens June 25, 2009

*The Whitney Museum is located at 945 Madison Avenue, New York City. Museum hours are: Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Friday from 1 p.m. to 9 p.m., closed Monday and Tuesday. Admission is \$15 for adults; Members, children (ages 11 and under), and New York City public high school students free. Senior citizens (62 and over) and students with valid ID: \$10. There is a \$6 admission fee for a pass to the Kaufman Astoria Studios Film & Video Gallery only. Admission is pay-what-you-wish on Fridays, 6-9 pm. For information, please call 212-570-3600 or visit [whitney.org](http://whitney.org).*