The shift in art-world domination from Paris to New York in the postwar period is summed up by Marcel Duchamp’s *Boîte-en-Valise* [17]. The work comprises a collection of miniatures and samples of the French-born artist’s pre-1935 output. Included, for example, is a tiny version of *Fountain*, the re-titled men’s urinal which emblematizes Duchamp’s one-time involvement with the iconoclasm of Dada. Ever since the demise of the Dada movement in the early 1920s Duchamp had moved between Paris and New York. Based in France when a new European war seemed imminent, he had sensibly decided to ‘pack his bags’.

The objects presented in the *Boîte* attested to cultural mutations. Early oil paintings by the artist were represented via reproductions. Objects which had once been ‘ready-mades’ (the term Duchamp applied to the mass-produced objects he had accorded art status) now had a paradoxically ‘crafted’ quality (the urinal is a case in point). The *Boîte* also spoke of commodification. Part of an edition (initially a ‘de luxe’ one of 24), it represented, in Duchamp’s words, ‘mass production on a modest scale.’ Overall it had a dual function. It was a portable museum, regrouping the œuvre of an iconoclast. But it was also a travelling salesman’s display case.

The *Boîte* exemplifies the transition between two worlds: the old Europe of the museum and the connoisseur, and the young America of the commercial gallery and the artistic commodity. Duchamp’s acceptance that art should incorporate the dominant modes of social production was a radical alternative to Greenberg’s Modernism as discussed in the last chapter. Greenberg had demanded that art remain true to its medium, purifying its means, maintaining aesthetic (and social) distance. For Duchamp, and those following in his wake, art’s very identity was in question.

**Marcel Duchamp**

In the early 1940s Duchamp was installed again in New York, the location of his Dada activities between 1915 and 1923. Although his works
Duchamp’s Boîte ‘unpacked’ in such a way that certain sections slid out to become free-standing display boards, whilst a sheaf of folders and black mounts bore other reproductions of works from his output. In all, it contained 69 items. These included a miniature version of the Large Glass (18) on celluloid and, next to it, three tiny versions of earlier ‘readymades’. These were, at the top, Paris Air of 1919 (a chemist’s ampoule, emptied of its contents and then re-sealed by Duchamp); in the middle, Traveller’s Folding Item of 1916 (a typewriter cover); and, at the bottom, Fountain (1917), the men’s urinal which had originally been rotated 90 degrees to sit on a plinth but was here ironically restored to a ‘functional’ position.

of that period, the ‘readymades’ and the enigmatic Large Glass, were legendary among a small community, Duchamp maintained a deliberately ‘underground’ profile. His Boîte, which was shown at Peggy Guggenheim’s gallery in late 1942, poignantly spoke of the sense of cultural transplantation felt by many émigré artists from Europe. However, unlike the French Surrealists with whom he was friendly, Duchamp had little obvious appeal for the rising generation of Abstract Expressionist artists. He had renounced art which appealed solely to the eye, or, in his terms, ‘retinal’ art, as early as 1912. Two alternative paths had opened up for Duchamp. One was embodied in the conceptual challenge posed by the ‘readymades’. The other involved the creation of a machine-age iconography, rendered in a dry, ironic, linear style. In the case of the Large Glass, he created a set of sci-fi mechanomorphs snagged in a complex machinery of human aspirations ranging from romantic love to scientific certainty (18).

Duchamp’s likely attitude to Abstract Expressionism can be gauged from a small work of 1946, entitled Wayward Landscape, which was incorporated as an ‘original’ item in one example from the first, exclusive, edition of Boîtes. At first glance it appears to be an abstract painting. In fact it is a large semen stain on funereal black satin. Although it was essentially ‘private’, an unconventional parting gift for a lover, succinctly evoking the embalming of desire, it stands as one of the first examples of what, in the 1960s, became known as ‘Body Art’, that is, art directly linked to the body and to bodily identity. Beyond this, some knowledge of the rich iconography of Duchamp’s Large Glass, properly titled The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even, yields another reading. It should be emphasized that this is indeed a
"reading" since it is largely based on Duchamp's notes, chiefly those from the so-called Green Box. These were seen by him as integral to the work. (Once again, Duchamp emerges as a pioneer of a new expressive form, this time the text-related art of the 1960s.)

Turning to the Glass [18], at the left of their lower 'Domain', a huddle of diagrammatized 'Bachelors' attempt to excite the 'Bride',

18 Marcel Duchamp
The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass), 1915–23
This work's technical inventiveness matches its iconographic density. It consists of two panes of glass set one above the other (the work shattered in transit in 1927 and was patiently reconstructed by Duchamp). The 'Oculist Witnesses' (lower right) were produced by meticulously scraping away a section of 'silvering' applied to that area of the Glass. Elsewhere, random procedures were utilized. The positions of the nine holes representing the Bachelors' 'shots' (upper right) were determined by firing paint-dipped matchsticks at the work from a toy cannon.

MARCEL DUCHAMP
with her orgasmic ‘blossoming’, in the upper ‘Domain’. Apart from triggering her ‘stripping’, the Bachelors’ communal arousal produces ‘love gasoline’ which, once refined in the receptacles to which they are hooked up, is ‘dazzled’ into the Bride’s orbit via a set of optical devices (the ‘Oculist Witnesses’ in the lower right of the Glass). Most of the droplets of love gasoline fall sadly short of their target in an area designated as that of the ‘Shots’. This short description evokes something of the Glass’s bleak hilarity as a satire on sexual relations, but from it the significance of Wayward Landscape can be appreciated; it is one of the Bachelors’/Duchamp’s ‘shots’. As a comment on male expressive/sexual urgency the gesture ionizes the new vogue for painterly bravado in American art linked to assertively ‘male’ artists such as Pollock, shortly to embark on his ‘drip’ paintings.

The reduction of the grand rhetoric of Abstract Expressionism to these terms is typical of Duchamp’s deflationary ‘anti-aesthetic’ impulse and yet again prefigures an entire postwar attitude. It is also typical of Duchamp that, in the later 1940s, he made no overt display of his distaste for contemporary trends. In 1945 the Surrealist émigrés, in league with a few American writers, published a special edition of their art journal View containing a comprehensive range of accounts of Duchamp’s activities, including André Breton’s essay decoding the Large Glass. This ensured a gradual dissemination of his concepts. Meanwhile Duchamp himself had begun planning a new project. This, his final full-scale work, Etant Donnés (‘Given . . .’) —a title deriving from a cryptic note for the Large Glass—was begun in secret around 1946 and not revealed publicly until 1969, months after his death. Its full effects were thus programmatically postponed as if Duchamp, who was obsessed with chess, calculated his game with posterity in advance.

Etant Donnés is permanently installed in the Philadelphia Museum of Art. As such it is one of the first examples of the ‘installation’ genre which would flourish later. (The German Dadaist Kurt Schwitters’s environmentally conceived Hanover Merzbau of 1923 was another important early installation.) Etant Donnés consists of a battered door through which the spectator peers via eye-holes at a floodlit tableau. This consists of a mannequin, representing a naked female, lying open-legged in a patently artificial landscape. She holds aloft a lamp, confounding an initial sense that she has been violated.

In a sense the work amounts to a hyper-real translation of the schematic ideograms of the Large Glass into grossly embodied form. It is as though the Bride who, for Duchamp, possessed unknowable, fourth-dimensional characteristics has fallen to earth in our measurable world. The door acts as a barrier between profane and spiritual domains, so that the spectators of the work become the Bachelors who, in the Glass, were constrained by perspectival and gravitational laws.
The (male) spectator’s enforced viewpoint ensures that the shocking split-second view through the holes effectively brings about the Bride’s ‘blossoming’. The installation therefore endows sight with the power of an invisible erotic transmisson, as though investing Duchamp’s bugbear, the sphere of the ‘retinal’, with a power untapped by conventional painting.

In 1957 Duchamp delivered an important lecture, ‘The Creative Act’, in which he argued that ‘the work of art is not performed by the artist alone’ and that the spectator’s point of view affects the all-important ‘transubstantiation’ of inert matter into art. The ritualistic, Catholic overtones here relate interestingly to Etant Donnés, but most important is the strategic belittling of the Modernist conception of the art object’s internal self-sufficiency in favour of a sense of its dependence on contingent, external factors such as audience participation. Indeed, Duchamp’s concern with the spectator’s share, to say nothing of his interest in the gendering of the relationship between spectator and artwork, would hover as a conceptual aura around much of the ambitious anti-Modernist art produced elsewhere in his lifetime.

**The spectator’s share: Cage, Rauschenberg, and assemblage**

The prime mover in disseminating Duchamp’s ideas in America was not the man himself, but John Cage. Having trained as a musician with Schoenberg, the Californian-born Cage was gradually establishing his avant-garde credentials with his ‘prepared piano’ when, in 1942, he first met Duchamp. His later interest in the Zen Buddhist philosophy of D.T. Suzuki, with whom he studied in 1945, led him to harness Duchamp’s love of paradox and gratuitous humour to a more evangelical conception of the need to abolish watertight distinctions between art and life. In line with Zen doctrines of passivity, Cage saw the imposition of mind or human will as the enemy of creation; art consisted in ‘purposeless play’, charged with the imperative of ‘waking us up to the very life we’re living’. The main Duchampian model here was undoubtedly that of the ‘readymade’ which, in the case of Fountain, miniaturized in the main section of the Boîte [17], had challenged the spectator to ‘find a new thought for that object’ through the elimination of authorial intervention.

In the early 1950s Cage’s utilization of chance in his own musical compositions, reinforced by the publication, in 1951, of Robert Motherwell’s pioneering Dada anthology, *The Dada Painters and Poets*, strongly appealed to visual artists oppressed by the relentless interiority of Abstract Expressionism. The fulcrum for this shift of emphasis was Black Mountain College in North Carolina, where Cage occasionally taught.

Among Black Mountain’s students, a pre-eminent figure was the Texan-born painter Robert Rauschenberg, whose first solo exhibition
Art education: Black Mountain College

Black Mountain College was a small but progressive art school with a strong community ethos, the opening of which, in 1933, had signalled a trend towards greater humanities and arts provision in American higher education. In that year a victim of the Nazis’ dissolution of the Dessau-based Bauhaus, the abstract painter Josef Albers, was invited to join the college staff, subsequently becoming head. Albers’s analytic attitudes towards colour interaction, along with other principles linked to Bauhaus teaching, thus became incorporated into US art education. His arrowedly apolitical position and tendency to downplay European tradition made him a suitably liberal and diplomatic figurehead during a period of international tensions. Various influential practitioners taught summer schools at the institution in the late 1940s and early 1950s including John Cage and his collaborator, the choreographer Merce Cunningham, and the poet Charles Olson, who was to succeed Albers as director in 1952.

Cage had admired in New York in 1952. Rauschenberg’s intuitive appreciation of Cage’s Dada-derived ideas led to a spontaneous interdisciplinary ‘happening’, to which several faculty members contributed, in the summer of 1952. Looking back to the Dada provocations recounted in Motherwell’s book, but also anticipating the performance genre that developed in the 1960s (see Chapter 6), the event involved the participants carrying out simultaneous actions. John Cage read texts such as the American Bill of Rights from a stepladder; Rauschenberg played scratchy Edith Piaf records; and the dancer Merce Cunningham danced in and around the audience, who were strategically centred by being seated in a sequence of square or circular formations. However, aside from the ‘purposeless play’ of the performers’ actions, the surest indications of the importation of Cage’s Zen aesthetics into a visual/performing arts context were Rauschenberg’s *White Paintings* of 1951, which hung in cross-formations from the ceiling as part of the environment. These pictures, usually consisting of several modular white-painted panels abutted together, reflected a pronounced discomfort with Abstract Expressionist bombast; they were passive receptors, awaiting events rather than prescribing sensations. As markers of an artistic *tabula rasa* they were not completely unprecedented. The Russian artist Malevich had produced his *White on White* paintings in 1918 as an outcome of different metaphysical preoccupations. However, Rauschenberg’s pictures broke decisively with Modernist assumptions of aesthetic self-containment. They questioned whether art experiences should actually be sought from ‘within’ objects. Cage responded in appropriate Zen style. His notorious ‘33’ of late 1952 involved a concert audience being enjoined to ‘listen’ to a piano piece consisting of three sections. Each section consisted of silence.

The spirit of Duchamp hovered behind much of this but the Cagean emphasis on Eastern philosophy arguably repressed the
French artist’s bodily preoccupations. These eventually surfaced in Rauschenberg’s work, but it is necessary first to chart his early career in some detail. For a time Rauschenberg oscillated in mercurial fashion between Dadaist/Duchampian and Abstract Expressionist principles. The *White Paintings* were succeeded, dialectically, by all-black ones, in which matt or gloss paint was applied to bases covered with fabric or crumpled paper. Whereas their ‘all-overness’ followed the new pictorial orthodoxies of Newman and Rothko, their blank, crackling resistance to optical pleasures parodied Greenbergian injunctions. Constantly alert to metaphor, Rauschenberg gradually introduced extra-artistic materials into his painting. The Cubists had pioneered the use of collage fragments within pictorial constructs earlier in the century, and the Dadaist Kurt Schwitters had taken the non-hierarchical implications of this further by incorporating rubbish into his Merz assemblages in the 1920s and 30s. Partly in the spirit of Schwitters, Rauschenberg incorporated newspapers into the bases for his work. In 1952 he produced *Asheville Citizen*, a two-part painting in which a whole sheet of newspaper, lightly brushed with brown-black paint evoking scatological associations, was very much the picture’s ‘subject’.

The consequences of this were far-reaching. As the critic Leo Steinberg later wrote in his important essay ‘Other Criteria’, Rauschenberg appeared to be implying that ‘any flat documentary surface that tabulates information is a relevant analogue of his picture plane’, with the implication that his work ‘stood for the mind itself … injecting incoming unprocessed data to be mapped in an overcharged field’. In subsequent works Rauschenberg assimilated the gridded variegation of text and photography in newspaper layout to a new conception of the pictorial ground as, in Steinberg’s terms, a ‘flatbed’ or work surface on which to pin heterogeneous images. An early example of such a practice was *Rebus* of 1955 in which fragments from different ‘worlds’—a printed reproduction of a flying insect, photographs of runners, a reproduction of Botticelli’s *Birth of Venus*, a page of comic-stripe imagery—were laid out in a line, punctuated by daubs of paint, as though constituting some indecipherable ‘message’.

By the early 1960s Rauschenberg had developed the technique to the extent of stacking up a whole array of divergent forms of information [60], reflecting the fact that throughout the 1950s America had seen a dizzying expansion in consumerism and the mass media. For instance, as a sign of things to come, receipts for television sales on Madison Avenue in New York escalated from 12.3 to 128 million dollars between 1949 and 1951. According to the critic Brian O’Doherty the perceptual adjustments involved in responding to this proliferating ‘image culture’ led Rauschenberg to develop an aesthetic of the ‘vernacular glance’. 

---

*THE SPECTATOR’S SHARE: CAGE, RAUSCHENBERG, AND ASSEMBLAGE* 43
Rauschenberg's inventiveness took a further turn in his so-called 'Combines'. Here the full repertoire of Duchamp's 'readymades' (which, as well as unitary objects, had included poetic or unexpected combinations of objects as in the 'assisted readymade', Bicycle Wheel, of 1913), were brought into a realignment with fine art practices in constructions fusing everyday objects, painting, and sculpture. In the case of one of these 'Combines', the notorious Bed of 1955 [19], the move from a horizontal to vertical orientation in the object's upright placement sets up an anthropomorphic counterpoint to Pollock's floor-based 'action paintings'. In being placed in the 'vertical posture of "art"', the object sheds its normal links with our sleeping and dreaming, and thus with the notion of psychic revelation synonymous with Pollock's practice.

These bodily associations go deeper, however; from the outside to the inside, so to speak. As with a short flurry of red canvases of 1953-5, Bed appears to equate paint with bodily fluids, as though making palpable the violence that Willem de Kooning acted out on the bodies of his contemporaneously produced Women [23]. Violent associations aside, stained bed-sheets inevitably have sexual connotations and, given that Rauschenberg had described his White Paintings to one of his first curators as being 'presented with the innocence of a virgin', it is tempting to think that he might have seen Bed as a counter-proposition to these in the spirit of the Dadaist Francis Picabia, who, in 1920, had blasphemously titled an ink splash Sainte Vierge. Picabia had been a close friend of Duchamp, and it becomes clear that with Bed Rauschenberg came close to recapitulating their scurrilous bodily repartee.9

Whatever the precise bodily associations of Bed, and a polymorphously perverse co-mingling of blood, semen, and faeces may certainly be involved, the way in which such flows are brought into counterpoint with the geometrical symmetry of the quilt produces an over-arching 'gendered' dialogue. Paint, which ultimately connotes the fine art tradition, is anarchically set against a product of the handcrafts or applied arts. The 'male' sphere of cultural production intrudes into the 'female' sphere of domestic labour. This transgression of categories also mobilizes deep-seated notions of purity and defilement, and encourages speculation about the way societies make use of taboos regarding bodily 'pollution' for purposes of social containment, a topic later studied by the anthropologist Mary Douglas.11 Earlier, in 1953, Rauschenberg had symbolically equated materials with incompatible cultural 'value' in his concurrently produced Dirt Paintings and Gold Paintings, the former consisting of compacted earth in shallow boxes, the latter of gold leaf overlaid on collage bases.

There are implicit democratizing impulses at work here, but the socio-political resonances of Rauschenberg’s practice would not fully
Robert Rauschenberg
Bed, 1955
Critic at the time darkly remarked that Bed looked as if an axe murder had been committed in it. Rauschenberg saw it differently. His greatest fear, he once confided, was that somebody might try and crawl into it.
emerge until later. In 1958–9 critics began to codify the evident Duchampian disrespect for aesthetic boundaries, in both Rauschenberg’s work and that of a growing body of fellow practitioners including Rauschenberg’s ally Jasper Johns, in terms of a notion of ‘Neo-Dada’. But if such work embraced provisional structures and hybrid juxtapositions, it was hardly openly nihilistic, as was often the case with Dada. Consequently the term ‘assemblage’ quickly came to replace it. This genre reached its apotheosis in William Seitz’s exhibition ‘The Art of Assemblage’, held at MOMA, New York, in 1961.

Seitz’s curatorial recognition of what was dubbed a newly aestheti
cized ‘urban collage environment’ led to several artistic rehabilitations in his catalogue for the show. A late Picasso sculpture, Babyoon and Young, of 1951, in which a toy car’s body brilliantly doubles for the ape’s features, now stood as a precursor of current preoccupations. In the exhibition itself, though, Picasso was downplayed in favour of Duchamp. Particularly significant was the inclusion of the reclusive Joseph Cornell, one of the few Americans to have responded inven
tively to Surrealism before the war. Over the years, Cornell had patiently constructed boxed miniaturized environments [20]. Their claustrophobic interiors, brimming with allusions, from French Symbolist poetry to Hollywood film, echoed his lifestyle in the New York suburbs caring for a demanding mother and a crippled brother. Cornell’s boxes represented a new artistic genre and were spiritualized counterweights to Duchamp’s more materially oriented Boîte-en-
Valise. However, Cornell was not as otherworldly as is sometimes suggested. By 1949 he had insinuated himself into Charles Egan’s gallery in New York where the young Rauschenberg, soon to show there, quickly absorbed his poetics of confinement, as did Jasper Johns somewhat later.

In stark contrast to Cornell’s late Romantic sensibility, Seitz’s cata
logue also alluded briefly to West Coast American tendencies in the constructions of Ed Keinholz and Bruce Conner. These artists mobi
lized vernacular idioms and outright ugliness to mock social hypocrisys (see Chapter 4). Such developments led Seitz at one point to define assemblage as a ‘language for impatient, hyper-critical and anarchic young artists’. This instancing of youth culture affiliations is significant. In the 1950s America had witnessed the emergence of ‘Beat’ culture, as exemplified by writers such as Jack Kerouac and the poet Allen Ginsberg. The latter produced nightmarish urban visions of ‘angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the starry dynamo in the machinery of the night’. His image-satu rated open-form incantations, partly deriving from ideas of ‘Projective verse’ developed by the Black Mountain professor Charles Olson, have broad analogies with Rauschenberg’s collaged surfaces. But, technicali
ties aside, Ginsberg was articulating the disaffection of a generation
born under the signs of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. (John Cage's promotion of Japanese philosophy has a socially-critical inflection in this context.) There was much in American culture at large for the ethically sensitive to feel uneasy about.

**McCarthyism and masculinity**

In the early 1950s the Cold War was at its height. The Korean conflict, entered by America to combat an imagined global expansion of Communism, had ended inconclusively in 1953. At home President Truman's 'loyalty order' of 1947, whereby government workers had been investigated for Soviet sympathies, had led to the Alger Hiss trial in 1950 in which dubious secret documents eventually secured the former State Department official's conviction for spying. The years 1950–4 saw the inexorable rise of Senator Joseph McCarthy, backed by the return of a Republican government in 1952 headed by President Eisenhower. McCarthy's reign of terror, which involved all manner of spurious accusations being levelled at suspected Communists, eventually ended in November 1957 when he was officially censured.

In such an atmosphere, artists with leftist instincts understandably felt vulnerable. To what extent did Rauschenberg reflect the 'Beat' writers' distaste for American chauvinism? In late 1952 and early 1953 he had travelled extensively in Europe with a close friend of the period, the painter Cy Twombly. Their desire to absorb European culture had symbolic weight at a time when American painting was relatively

21 Alberto Burri

*Sacchi H8, 1953*

The sacks used in these canvases often displayed stencilled letters relating to their commercial origins. This suggests some link with the German prewar Dadaist, Kurt Schwitters who made collages from printed waste paper. However, Burri, unlike Rauschenberg, dissociated himself from the Dada spirit. He also played down the evident biologic associations of the works, emphasizing their abstract materiality.
inward-looking. Italy, and Rome in particular, proved revelatory, and Rauschenberg twice visited the studio of the Rome-based painter Alberto Burri, whose Sacchi [21] of the early 1950s, consisting of patched and stitched burlap bags mounted on stretchers, were part of an informel movement paralleling that in France.

Italian informel had its own distinctive character, particularly in the paintings of Lucio Fontana, who powerfully rearticulated the spatial dynamism of early twentieth-century Italian Futurist art by opening up his picture planes via punctures and slashes. But Burri's work, like that of his French contemporaries, had sadistic bodily associations. Tears and bursts in the sacking of certain works appeared to be linked metaphorically to their blood-red colouration [21]. These must surely have affected Rauschenberg's contemporaneous red paintings, to say nothing of Bed. Burri's achievements have tended to drop out of
general accounts of postwar art but he was clearly influential internationally. He had several exhibitions in New York in 1953–5 and was accorded a role in Seitz’s 1961 assemblage exhibition.

Rauschenberg’s travelling companion Twombly also took elements from informel art, this time Dubuffet’s graffiti vocabulary. Eventually he was to produce paintings marrying the gesturalism of Pollock and de Kooning to inchoate scrabbles evoking the splatters, revisions, and erasures of childish script. His commitment to the sensuality of Mediterranean culture, which would lead to his settling permanently in Rome in the early 1960s, is conveyed by an ambivalent tribute to Raphael’s Vatican fresco of the School of Athens [22].

In their embrace of Burri and Dubuffet, Rauschenberg and Twombly were staking out new territory, considering that American critics such as Greenberg, whilst extolling Dubuffet’s achievements, nevertheless stressed the superior virility of American art. In this sense the artists might be seen as strategically importing the private or the visceral into a more stoical or ‘manly’ avant-garde climate. By 1964 Rauschenberg had been taken up by the American critical establishment, to the extent that its political manoeuvring may have contributed to his winning the prestigious Grand Prize at the Venice Biennale, whilst Twombly was virtually written off by American critics for appearing too ‘European’. However, in the early 1950s they both implicitly aligned themselves with the bodily indulgences of informel aesthetics. The chauvinism of McCarthy’s politics would have been reflected for them in the assertively macho challenge presented by their artistic elders, the Abstract Expressionists.

In 1953–54 it was de Kooning more than anybody else who epitomized the male-centredness of Abstract Expressionism. He was now producing semi-figurative images of women [23] which responded, possibly ironically, to Dubuffet. Whatever his personal attitude may have been—and he talked of savouring the ‘fleshy part of art’ encapsulated in the tradition of the European nude but of simultaneously wishing to get beyond it to the ‘idea of the idol’—such aggressive images could hardly avoid upholding macho stereotypes. This was reinforced by the well-known predilection of certain Abstract Expressionists for hard drinking and domestic violence.

For younger artists who felt ill at ease with such overbearing masculinism, defiance could take forms that were already sanctioned in structures of male avant-garde success. This is encapsulated in a Duchampian gesture Rauschenberg carried out after his return to America in 1953 implicating de Kooning in an Oedipal scenario. Rauschenberg persuaded the older artist to donate a drawing to him for the purpose of erasure. Whilst de Kooning retained some authority by ensuring that the drawing he supplied was stubbornly greasy, the eventual ghostly trace was designated Erased de Kooning and signed

50 DUCHAMP’S LEGACY: THE RAUSCHENBERG–JOHNS AXIS