

PROPERTY FROM THE CUNNINGHAM DANCE FOUNDATION SOLD TO BENEFIT THEIR LEGACY PLAN

The choreographer Merce Cunningham was among the most dynamic and creative forces in post-war America. Together with his partner, the composer John Cage, they changed the face of dance and music respectively, breaking free from centuries of tradition and creating work that remains as influential today as it did when it was first performed over half a century ago. Their pioneering careers led them to develop lasting friendships with some of the twentieth century's most influential artists, which resulted in some of the most groundbreaking collaborations in the field of visual and dramatic arts.

Merce Cunningham first met Robert Rauschenberg in 1953 when Cunningham's newly formed dance company gave its first performance at Black Mountain College in North Carolina.

Cunningham was impressed by Rauschenberg's Combines, in which he used non-traditional materials and found objects in innovative combinations. Together with Cage the three became close friends and collaborators with Rauschenberg becoming the company's first Artistic Advisor until 1964. Rauschenberg became an important force, designing the sets, costumes and lighting for many of Cunningham's most well-known productions including *Summerspace*, *Suite for Five and Crises*, in which he famously constructed new sets for each venue from materials he found in and around the theater. One of Rauschenberg's successors as Artistic Advisor was the English artist Mark Lancaster whose innovative set and costume designs went on to win many awards and whose paintings have been widely exhibited and are in numerous public and private collections. Attracted by her use of indeterminacy, the practice of using chance and natural forces to act upon her work, Cunningham invited Dove Bradshaw.

along with William Anastasi, to become joint artistic advisors to his dance company in 1984. The resonances between Bradshaw's work and that of Cunningham's are clear; both made extensive use of chance procedures as part of their creation. Bradshaw's Contingency Series abandons traditional artistic practices and uses materials that react differently depending on environmental conditions, just as Cunningham abandons not only musical forms, but narrative and other conventional elements of dance composition—such as cause and effect, and climax and anticlimax.

Cunningham's lightness of touch and willingness to re-write the accepted rules produced some of the most memorable works of modern dance. In many ways these artists gained inspiration and energy from his ideas about artistic freedom and reflecting them in their own work.

Since Merce Cunningham's death in 2009 the Merce Cunningham Dance Foundation has been dedicated to ensuring the preservation of his legacy. As part of their work, the Company has been conducting a two-year tour at venues across the world performing eighteen of Cunningham's seminal works. From March 22-27, at the Joyce Theater in New York, the company will give audiences the extraordinary opportunity to see Cunningham's choreography performed by the final group of dancers he personally trained in a repertory program that has not been seen in New York for decades. This profoundly moving engagement will include two Cunningham masterworks—*CRWDSPCR* and *Quartet*, and will conclude with *Antic Meet*, an iconic piece, not seen since 1969, that captures the exuberant and collaborative spirit that existed between the choreographer and Robert Rauschenberg.

