GAGOSIAN GALLERY

THE BEST BOB
by Charlie Finch

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Larry Gagosian and his lieutenant Ealan Wingate were justifiably proud as they greeted well-wishers at Gagosian’s 21st Street Chelsea space last night during the opening of their new Robert Rauschenberg retrospective -- the tightest collection of elite, historical Rauschenbergs ever assembled in one space.

Included are many of the classic Rauschenberg pieces from the 1950s, such as his Brice Marden-like flag with pole, a broom made from white paint cans and an unbelievable pink vaginally shaped canvas wall sculpture.

The question in the Rauschenberg market since Bob passed away in 2008 has been how to separate the very best from the vast trove of holdings, and get Jasper Johns-like prices.

With just a roomful alone of sculptured cardboard boxes, which anticipate and dominate Warhol’s Brillo Box, Gagosian has assured that the wealthiest collectors will soon be exchanging currency for Rauschenberg’s cardboard.

The best piece in the show consists of ten stacked boxes adjoining a rusted bicycle and a bucket of sand. This is as dynamic a metaphor for our current recession as any Walker Evans photo.

And with this Rauschenberg collection, Gagosian continues to assure us that the one sector of life that will thrive even in the worst times is the art world.

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Robert Rauschenberg
Crossings (Borealis)
1990
Gagosian Gallery