

### **Critical Study – “The Tree Frog” by Robert Rauschenberg**

The painting/print I am studying is called “The Tree Frog”. Robert Rauschenberg painted it in 1964 at the age of 39. He could have painted it for many reasons, to show his own feelings or to display a political message.

Rauschenberg use two methods to create this piece, these are screen-printing and oil on canvas. This particular method of screen-printing was very useful to Rauschenberg as he was able to take photographs and use their negatives to create photographic screen. This was achieved by use of different materials and chemicals. The advantage of this is it would allow him to have almost photo realistic prints on his work in any colour he desired. The other media used was oil paints, this allowed his painting to escape these almost uniform photographic images and create a more expressive whole using different brush strokes. The scale of the piece is 244 by 183cm, which is suitable for these particular methods to create a painting with impact.

The work shows several prints, these appear to be an eagle, an astronaut, a construction site, a weather prediction dial, a yacht and a figure standing on a street. There doesn't seem to be any particular link between these images. The prints are backed with a large mass of orange that has been painted through the middle of the work using vigorous brush strokes.

The composition of the work is fairly even although objects and colour seem to be stronger through the center of the image vertically. Other than that the work is fairly balance yet random. The eye is mainly drawn to the image of an eagle which particularly stands out at it is the colour black on a bright orange background. This contrast makes it greatly noticeable. I feel that the overall composition of the piece is very successful as it has a point of main focus that doesn't drown the rest of the painting.

The three main colours of the work are orange, blue and black although there is a slight presence of crimson red and mustard yellow. Orange and blue major clashing colours although I feel this is the way that Rauschenberg wanted it to appear. The bright colour of orange shows warmth and combined with the blue shows a clashing, bold arrangement that seems to be out standing and showing some kind of pride.

The work itself is not abstract but representational as it has recognizable objects with meanings behind them. There is no illusion of depth or 3D it is mainly 2D although has layering of colour and image. I think that the picture “The Tree Frog” expresses pride for America being created in 1964. The clues for this are in the prints, the eagle is a common icon of America, an astronaut representing the space race, the statue of liberty another icon of America and a construction site showing how America is rapidly developing. The mood of the painting is lively and bold and it makes you feel happy and warm.