

## Celebrating 175: Richard Artschwager, Clippings, 1965-1969

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Castelli artists for his group of eight American representative--Jasper Johns, Frank Stella and John Chamberlain, in addition to Rauschenberg. The commissioner maintains, perhaps hopelessly at this point, that he had admired such Castelli painters as Johns and Rauschenberg for as long as Castelli had, and that, in fact, this similarity of taste is one basis of their friendship.

The small, intense art world is the most perfectly designed rumor amplifier since the radio tube. An image was built in my mind of Leo Castelli as a suave and secretive Machiavellian, who, with high-powered public-relations techniques, ran the most influential avant-garde art gallery in New York.

He was the man who promoted the astonishing growth of Pop art, which had burst so suddenly into public prominence and collectors' favor. Pop art, or New Realism, uses the images (billboards, comic strips, cafeteria food displays, film heroes), materials (real objects such as fans and refrigerators, old plumbing pipes, various types of plastic) and techniques (silk screen, photo montage, photo-engraving) from the everyday life of our commercial and industrial society--which recent abstract art has ignored.

Castelli's appearance does not fit the raucous, breezy Pop art image. An odd mixture of Prussian stiffness and sinuous elegance, he always seems to bend toward one slightly from the hips, at once deferential, concerned and aloof. He is small and slender, and his lean, boyish face makes him look much younger than fifty-seven. For a man who appreciates the broad, eccentric gesture, and admires flamboyant painting, his dress is unmemorably neat, cool and gray; he is one of the few men who can look conservatively dressed even in a bathing suit.

To call attention to his elegance is perhaps only to pay tribute to his upbringing in Trieste, in a rich banking family; and to his first marriage, to the daughter of a Rumanian industrialist. (A grandfather by that marriage, Castelli is now, in his second marriage, the father of a little boy.) But what is interesting and central about Castelli is the way he epitomizes the phenomenal explosion of American art that has taken place since World War II, and which, in a sense, culminated the Venice Biennale.

When Castelli came to America from Paris, in 1941, with his first wife and still wealthy father-in-law, American art was considered a poor provincial relation of the great School of Paris. It was not apparent then, but the School of Paris had already gone into a decline from which it has not yet recovered. Also barely visible were the beginnings of the Abstract Expressionist group of American painters who were to dominate art in the 1950's. Many of the Surrealists of Paris also took up residence in New York during the War. Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst, André Breton, André Masson and

[[image]] FAIR LADY

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