

National Gallery of Art News Release



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NATIONAL GALLERY PRESENTS RECENT WORKS BY RAUSCHENBERG
INSPIRED BY ARTIST'S WORLD TOUR, MAY 12 - SEPTEMBER 2, 1991

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Some of Robert Rauschenberg's best and most colorful creations in decades, often inspired by the diverse cultures he experienced as part of the Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange (ROCI), will be featured in a multi-media exhibition in the East Building of the National Gallery of Art, May 12 through September 2, 1991. Rauschenberg, a pivotal figure in twentieth-century art, began the ROCI tour in 1985 to foster world understanding and peace through art.

ROCI, an exhibition that is part of the Gallery's year-long 50th anniversary celebration, will include approximately 150 paintings, drawings, works of sculpture, and photographs by Rauschenberg, in addition to videotapes. "Astral Convertible - Part Two," a new dance piece commissioned by the Gallery and created by choreographer Trisha Brown and the artist, will be performed by the Trisha Brown Company in the East Building, May 15 - 18, 1991.

"Through his devotion to ROCI and its complex, daring agenda Rauschenberg has created a great deal of remarkable art," said National Gallery director J. Carter Brown. "His dedication to the National Gallery and to this grand finale of ROCI has been without precedent in our fifty-year history."

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The ROCI project, which was funded almost exclusively by Rauschenberg, has been to Mexico, Chile, Venezuela, China, Tibet, Japan, Cuba, the Soviet Union, Berlin, and Malaysia. In each location the artist collected images and materials, met with artistic communities, and explored the cities and countryside. He took photographs while his staff shot extensive videotapes to record what the artist saw and experienced.

A ROCI exhibition was held in each location. The first exhibition, held in Mexico City in 1985, included many of his monochromatic paintings and objects from the 1970s, which set the foundation and provided a historical retrospective for his new audiences. As the traveling exhibition evolved over a six-year period, it also featured works from each host country as well as from previous ROCI venues. Rauschenberg donated a work of art to each country and exhibition catalogues include contributions by local poets, writers, or journalists.

From his more traditional Mexico paintings to his witty and engaging sculpture from Tibet, the colorful art of ROCI displays Rauschenberg's acute powers of observation, experimentation, and the creative application of his artistic past.

"I feel strong in my belief, based on my varied and widely traveled collaborations, that a one-to-one contact through art contains potent peaceful powers, and is the most non-elitist way to share exotic and common information, hopefully seducing us into creative mutual understandings for the benefit of all," wrote Rauschenberg during his travels.

Born in Port Arthur, Texas, in 1925, Rauschenberg has become an artist who is recognized worldwide. His work is included in virtually every important international collection of contemporary art. His career has been marked by a continuing sense of innovation -- revealed in creations such as his "black," "red," or "white" paintings and his "combines" that incorporate painting and various objects (a stuffed goat, a tire, a bed), and his revitalization of some printmaking technologies. Many credit Rauschenberg with bridging the gap between abstract expressionism and pop art, as well as, in his words, the gap between "art and life."

"The works in ROCI reveal Rauschenberg at the height of his power. The excitement about the ROCI exhibition at the National Gallery has been building over the past six years as outstanding works from each of the stops were displayed in the East Building," said Jack Cowart, National Gallery curator of twentieth-century art. "Now we will bring together works of art from all of the ROCI sites, in addition to several earlier pieces, and a major group of new works created especially for this, the ROCI/USA venue."

Cowart selected the works for the exhibition from hundreds produced by Rauschenberg. The fully illustrated catalogue, published by the National Gallery of Art and Prestel Verlag, includes an introduction by Cowart; writings by Rosetta Brooks, José Donoso, Roberto Fernández, Heiner Müller, Octavio Paz, Laba Pingcuo, Yevgeny Yevtushenko, and Wu Zuguang; a ROCI chronology; and a conversation between Rauschenberg and Donald Saff, artistic director for ROCI.