

# OFFSET

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ROBERT  
RAUSCHENBERG  
AT USF  
GRAPHICSTUDIO

RAUSCHENBERG



# OFFSET

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## ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG AT USF GRAPHICSTUDIO

Curated by Margaret Miller and Mark Fredricks

**JANUARY 19 - MARCH 2, 2024**

Contemporary Art Museum  
University of South Florida, Tampa

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# CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b> Margaret Miller	<b>1</b>
<b>THE DYNAMICS OF COLLABORATION AND THE ANALOGY OF OFFSET PRINTING</b> Mark Fredricks	<b>7</b>
<b>COMMUNICATING 'WORLDLY' THROUGH ART: RAUSCHENBERG'S OVERSEAS CULTURE INTERCHANGE</b> John R. Blakinger	<b>23</b>
<b>UBIQUITY AS LEGACY: OR HOW ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG CHANGED EVERYTHING AND EVERYBODY IN ART</b> Christian Viveros-Fauné	<b>31</b>
<b>TAMPA CLAY PIECES</b> Callan Donahoe	<b>43</b>
<b>AIRPORT SUITE</b> Hanna Weber	<b>45</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</b> Margaret Miller + Mark Fredricks	<b>47</b>
<b>EXHIBITION CHECKLIST</b>	<b>49</b>





# INTRODUCTION

Margaret Miller

*I feel strongly in my beliefs, 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, seducing us into creative mutual understandings for the benefit of all.*

— Robert Rauschenberg, Tobago, 22 October 1984  
(from National Gallery of Art ROCI catalogue)

*OFFSET: Robert Rauschenberg at USF Graphicstudio* considers and honors the innovative and collaborative relationship between Donald J. Saff and Robert Rauschenberg. Now designated as the Institute for Research in Art, Saff founded Graphicstudio in 1968 as part of a renaissance in American printmaking and as a university-based “experiment in art and education.” Graphicstudio’s significance as a fine art publisher is well documented. On March 5, 1986, Senator Ted Kennedy acknowledged “the important contribution Graphicstudio has made to the contemporary art world” as part of the congressional record (see image on p. 3). In recognition of the quality and relevance of the artworks produced at the studio, an archive was established at the National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. in 1991 and continues to expand today. One print from each edition produced at Graphicstudio is given to the University of South Florida Collection, managed by the USF Contemporary Art Museum.

Donald Saff’s distinguished academic career at USF began in 1965 as an Associate Professor in the Visual Arts Department. By 1971, he was appointed founding Dean of the College of Fine Arts. At Graphicstudio he was already bringing acclaimed artists to USF and enhancing the USF art collection with the production of innovative print editions. As Dean he was a disruptor, bringing leading experimental artists from across disciplines to the USF campus. Larry Austin, noted for his electronic and computer-generated music, taught for six years in the Music Department. Noted sound artist Max Neuhaus performed an underwater sound experiment from his *Water Whistle* series in a campus swimming pool in 1972; I was one of the participants. In 1973, I brought my yoga mat to USF’s planetarium for a performance by Stan VanDerBeek, where the artist projected images on the dome to demonstrate the potential for communal, interactive, and participatory communication. In 1971, Saff succeeded in getting Pablo Picasso to agree to have *Bust of a Woman*, the largest Picasso to date at one hundred feet tall, built on the USF campus. Plans failed due to a lack of support from the community.

Critical to understanding the depth and range of Saff’s expertise is to know that he began his academic career in 1955 at Queens College,



Robert Rauschenberg, *Scatole Personali*, 1951. painted wooden box with lid, wooden beads, fabric, soil, stones and winged insect. 1-3/4 x 3-3/4 x 13-1/4 in. Gift of Donald Saf, Collection of Institute for Research in Art, University of South Florida. Photo: Will Lytch.

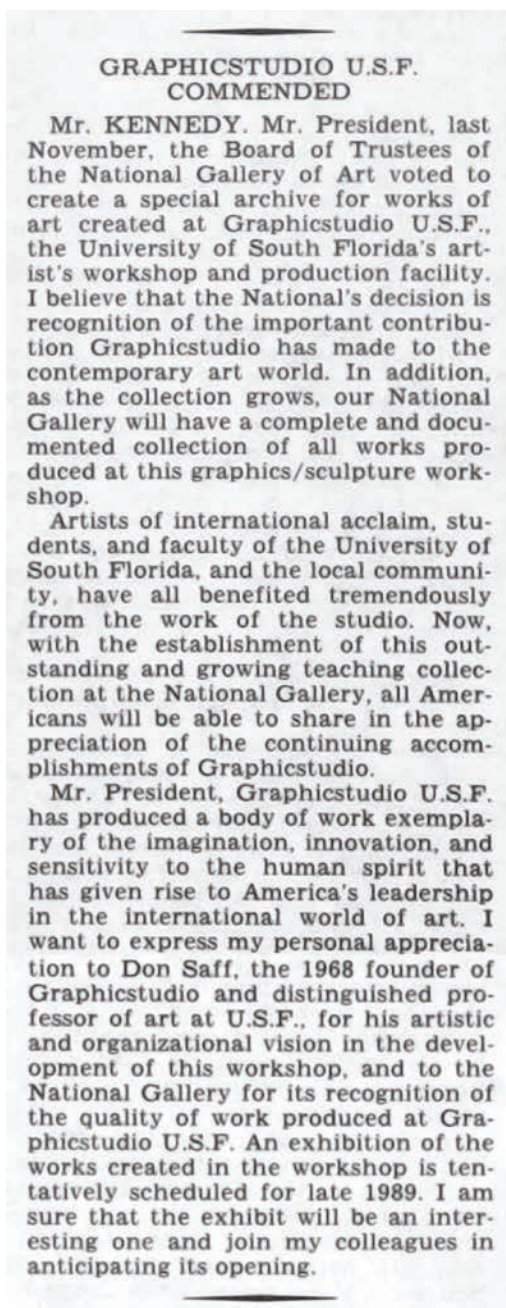


City University of New York in electrical engineering. He shifted his major to art history and printmaking and was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship in printmaking to the Instituto Statale di Belle Art in Urbino, Italy in 1964, the same year that Rauschenberg was awarded the International Grand Prize in Painting at the 32<sup>nd</sup> Venice Biennale. Saff brings expertise in art history, including studying with Meyer Schapiro at Columbia University, a background in electrical engineering, extensive experience as a printmaker, and a distinguished artistic career to his collaborative relationships with artists. In 2015, he was awarded a certificate from the Guinness World Records for his contributions to American and English horology by completing the world's most accurate pendulum clock. He has even trained and competed in dog agility competitions with his poodles. Whatever Saff's chosen endeavor, the result is world-class.

Don Saff infused Graphicstudio with a dynamic collaborative energy and engaged in experimental projects that pushed the boundaries of techniques used in traditional printmaking. Saff had encountered Rauschenberg at Cedar Tavern, Greenwich Village's hang-out for the avant-garde, and was reintroduced by

James Rosenquist in 1972. The environment Saff created at Graphicstudio was conducive to Rauschenberg's creative process, and

Rauschenberg experimented and embraced technological, conceptual, and aesthetic innovations that stretched and re-invented traditional approaches to printmaking. Rauschenberg produced thirty editions over three decades and five editioned objects for ROCI that embodied his interpretive encounter with the cultures in the countries he visited. He worked with Saff and selected faculty including Oscar Bailey, Alan Eaker, and David Yager, as well as several generations of skilled printers, fabricators, and collaborators, including Marcia Brown, Greg Burnett, Paul Clinton, Nick Conroy, Ken Elliott, Patrick Foy, Michael Harrigan, Susie Hennessy, Alan Holoubek, Eric Holt, George Holzer, Julio Juristo, Michelle Juristo, Tom Kettner, Tom Pruitt, Charles Ringness, Deli Sacilotto, Stephen Saff, Conrad Schwable, Dan Stack, Eric Vontillius, Lawrence Voytek, Brenda Woodard, Theo Wujcik, and others.



United States Congressional Record, Senate, March 5, 1986.

As director of the USF Galleries Program in 1980, I was inspired by the achievements of acclaimed artists working at Graphicstudio to curate an exhibition titled *FIVE IN FLORIDA*

with Richard Anuszkiewicz, John Chamberlain, Jules Olitski, Robert Rauschenberg, and James Rosenquist. Rauschenberg loaned a 60-foot-long work with 97 panels zipped together titled *Hiccups* to the exhibition. We borrowed the work directly from his studio in Captiva, Florida. Today, the work is in the collection of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and is too fragile to travel or it would have been included in the exhibition. In 2001, I was asked to add directing Graphicstudio to my responsibilities as director of the USF Contemporary Art Museum. I continue to be honored and intimidated to carry on the immense legacy of Donald Saff.

Mark Fredricks, Research Administrator, and I have co-curated *OFFSET: Robert Rauschenberg at USF Graphicstudio* to tell the story of the creative relationship between Don Saff and Bob Rauschenberg. The impetus for the exhibition was a recent gift from Saff of Rauschenberg's *Scatole Personali*, one in a series of wood or metal boxes containing found objects and detritus created by Rauschenberg during his travels to Italy and North Africa with artist Cy Twombly in 1952-53. Rauschenberg's radical innovative spirit is evident in *Scatole Personali* and led to what he termed *Combines*, artworks that blurred the boundaries of painting and sculpture and imbued ordinary objects with new meaning. Rauschenberg memorably described his work as existing in "the gap between art and life."

Rauschenberg also explored the structure of movement with the Judson Dance Theater. The 1968 print *Autobiography* shows the artist on roller skates with a parachute and highlights his exploration as a choreographer. His friendships and collaborative relationships with John Cage, Merce Cunningham, Trisha Brown, Paul Taylor, and Steve Paxton are well established. In 2007,

Trisha Brown was named Distinguished Master Artist at USF and worked in residence in the USF College of The Arts. A network of events included the recreation of the 1983 performance *Set and Reset* that Trisha Brown choreographed in collaboration with Robert Rauschenberg, who designed the sets and costumes, and Laurie Anderson, who wrote the original score. Many art historians and theoreticians have written on the pivotal role Rauschenberg played as an avant-garde artist interacting with popular media and provoking dialogue with viewers, the surrounding world and with art history. He has been described as working in a Neo-Dada style.

Beginning in 1949, Rauschenberg began photographing the world, and the images, reflecting his investigation of the reality he encountered, found their way into his work. Selected images from hundreds of photographs taken on a trip to China in 1982 were editioned as single images and also collaged, with the assistance of George Holzer, into *Chinese Summerhall*, a 100-foot-long scroll that fills one gallery in the exhibition.

The trip to China was the catalyst for the large-scale exhibition that was to tour the world known as ROCI, the Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange, organized by Saff as the Artistic Director in collaboration with Rauschenberg. Saff's organization of the tour, with the assistance of Brenda Woodard, was an extraordinary feat, filled with danger and opportunity, and required tremendous diplomacy as Saff met with museum directors, curators, poets, writers, cultural leaders, and totalitarian figures to find the appropriate venues for ROCI. Saff visited "sensitive" countries where freedom of expression was limited, evaluating their relevance to

Rauschenberg's desire to make the ROCI tour a peace-making enterprise that would function as an interchange with local artists and cultures. Saff worked on fundraising for the project, but ultimately Rauschenberg paid all the expenses himself to avoid interference with the scope and intent of the project. Between 1984 and 1990, the ROCI exhibition traveled to ten countries: Mexico, Chile, Venezuela, China, Tibet, Japan, Cuba, the Soviet Union, East Germany, and Malaysia. The project concluded in 1991 in Washington D.C. with an exhibition at the National Gallery of Art. ROCI occurred as the Cold War began to end, coinciding with a time of radical change in the world order. Both Saff and Rauschenberg recognized the late-capitalist and globalized society that framed the ROCI project. See John Blakinger's essay on page 23 for more on ROCI and its global impact.

Robert Rauschenberg was a prolific artist who exploited a diversity of materials and styles that inspired and influenced generations of artists all over the world. Christian Viveros-Fauné, writer and Curator-at-Large for the Contemporary Art Museum, addresses this legacy in his essay included in this workbook on page 31. He focuses on the six artists in *OFFSET* that have shown work in temporary exhibitions in the USF Contemporary Art Museum and/or worked in residence at Graphicstudio: the late Trisha Brown, Bosco Sodi, Tavares Strachan, Narsiso Martinez, Rochelle Feinstein, and Christian Marclay.

In his essay that begins on page 7, Mark Fredricks discusses how Rauschenberg redefined the nature of printmaking in his collaborations with Don Saff. Art History MA students Callan Donahoe and Hanna Weber have researched and developed detailed



Robert Rauschenberg and Donald Saff. Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York. Photo: Unattributed, 1972.

descriptions on pages 43 and 45 of some of the key works included in the exhibition.

Robert Rauschenberg and Donald Saff spent many years engaged in creative endeavors. Together, they recognized the responsibilities of art, its transformational powers, and the possibilities for profound meaning and positive social change.

—

Margaret Miller  
 Professor and Director  
 USF Institute for Research in Art  
 Contemporary Art Museum and Graphicstudio





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UNTIL READY FOR USE  
OR INSPECTION

Robert Rauschenberg, *Made in Tampa Clay Pieces: Tampa Clay Piece 1*, 1972. clay with screenprinted lacquer decals and soil patina. 14-1/2 x 15-1/2 x 3/4 in. Published by Graphicstudio, University of South Florida Collection. Photo: Peter Foe.

# THE DYNAMICS OF COLLABORATION AND THE ANALOGY OF OFFSET PRINTING

Mark Fredricks

*OFFSET: Robert Rauschenberg at USF Graphicstudio* explores the remarkable collaborative relationship between Donald J. Saff and Robert Rauschenberg. As director of Graphicstudio, Saff demonstrated the unique ability to draw out the best in both the artists that were invited to work at the atelier and its highly skilled printmaking, photography, and sculpture staff. The list of artists who collaborated with Graphicstudio under Saff's leadership is a who's who of contemporary art: just a few of whom include Richard Anuszkiewicz, Arakawa, Jim Dine, Nancy Graves, Roy Lichtenstein, Philip Pearlstein, Mel Ramos, James Rosenquist, and Ed Ruscha. This exhibition looks closely at Saff's relationship with Robert Rauschenberg because it embodied the experimental, transgressive spirit of the three main figures of this exhibition: Rauschenberg, Saff, and Graphicstudio.

The title of the exhibition refers to offset printing, a technique where the desired image is offset to a rubber blanket, which temporarily holds the image before transferring it to the printed surface. This method is used to improve both image clarity and production speed. Offset printing crops up in key moments throughout

the exhibition. It is visually referenced in the printing and labels on cardboard boxes and bags in the *Made in Tampa* series and among the *Tampa Clay Pieces*. Offset printing inks can be found leached out of the newspaper scraps used in the *Crops* suite, colorfully rephrased on the fabrics of the *Airport Suite*, in their native habitat in the full set of ROCI posters, and on the cardboard foundation of Narsiso Martinez's 2021 work *Cara Cara*, one of several artworks included in the exhibition that reveal Rauschenberg's influence and legacy.

Offset printing can also be used as an analogy for Rauschenberg's collaborative process, one which often involves an intermediary between matrix and substrate. For Rauschenberg, ideas, techniques, and images would sometimes pass through his fellow collaborators as a way to refine and clarify his approach while strengthening image quality. Rauschenberg's method of collaboration, according to Saff, "proceeds to an exploration of the unknown and uncharted."<sup>1</sup> Throughout their extraordinary relationship, examples of Don Saff acting as an advisor, editor, and guide to Rauschenberg's ventures into the unknown are numerous. Whether suggesting just the right printmaking

1 Rauschenberg, Robert, and Donald Saff. *7 Characters*. Gemini G.E.L., 1983, p. 7.



technique for an edition at Graphicstudio or engaging in unofficial diplomacy while paving the way for Rauschenberg's visit to each country on the ROCI tour, Saff's relationship with the artist invariably improved the projects on which they worked.

### RAUSCHENBERG IN TAMPA

The first example of this form of collaboration produced at Graphicstudio was the *Made in Tampa* series. After relocating to Captiva, Florida in 1968, Rauschenberg's practice of incorporating non-traditional materials into his artworks had turned to the most abundant byproduct of a big move: cardboard boxes. The *Made in Tampa* series of twelve prints builds upon Rauschenberg's focus in the early 1970s on this "material of waste and softness" and pushed his work with cardboard to new levels of experimentation.<sup>2</sup> Featuring cardboard boxes in various states of construction and deconstruction, the *Made in Tampa* series also used paper trash bags, waterproof tar paper, and a container of carborundum grit for grinding lithographic stones as subjects. Saff described Rauschenberg's openness and interest in discovering unusual material to use in the *Made in Tampa* series by saying, "it was as if we had been exposed to a new language whose vocabulary and syntax had been there all the time but had somehow escaped our attention."<sup>3</sup>

Rauschenberg's experimentation with Saff and the Graphicstudio team extended beyond the use of unconventional subject matter. Rauschenberg's interest in color, not just applying it to the surface of the paper but actually turning the fibers of the paper a

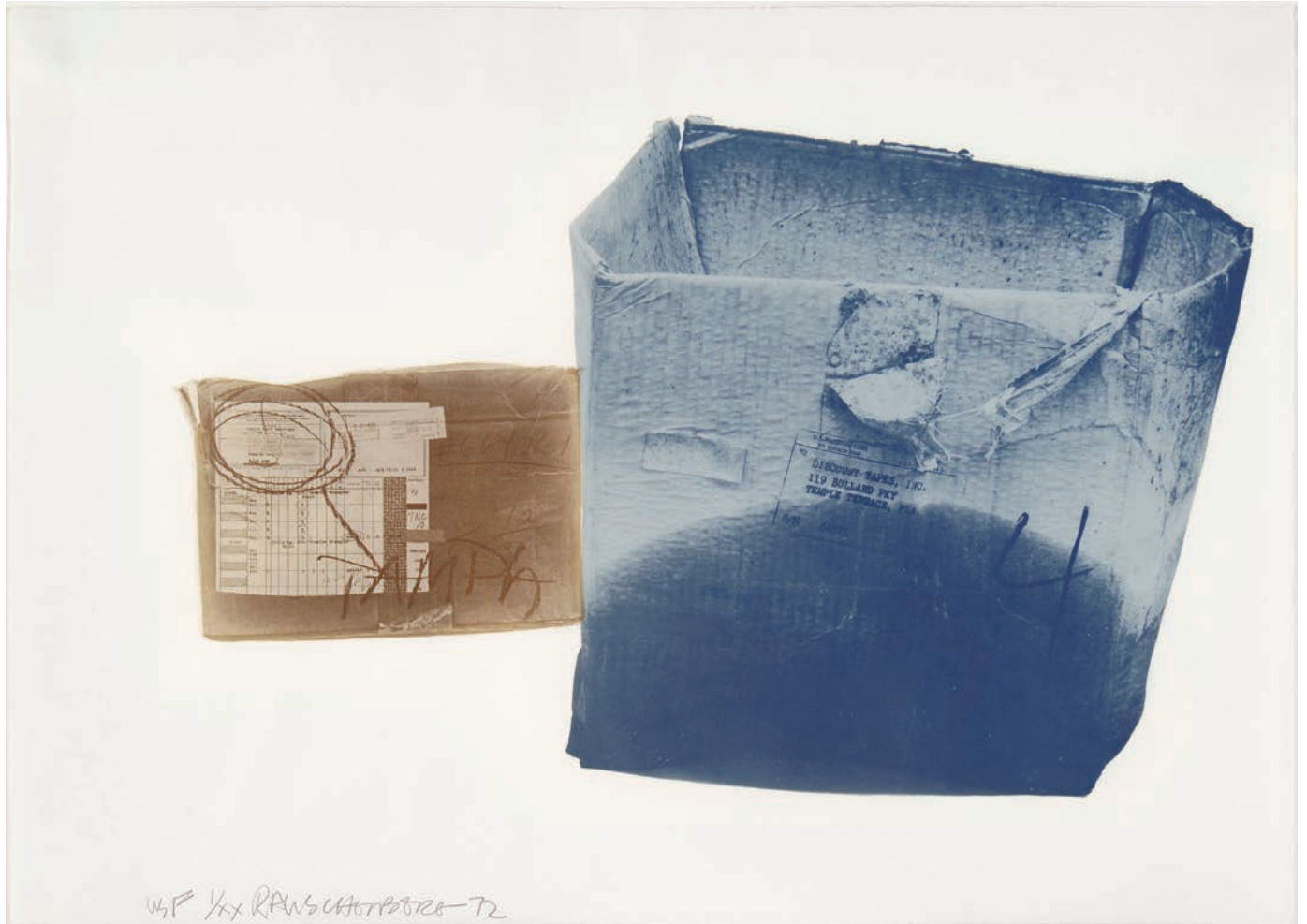
different color, led Saff and the Graphicstudio printmakers to assist Rauschenberg in returning to a process that would push the series into a new direction for editioned printmaking as a whole. Blueprinting is a contact printing method where paper is impregnated with light sensitive chemicals and exposed with light to render an image in characteristic cyan color. This method was previously used by Rauschenberg, making it an attractive option to achieve the color penetration he was seeking. The Graphicstudio team formulated a way to accomplish blueprinting on heavy fine art paper, and several prints in the *Made in Tampa* series incorporate blueprint with lithography to colorfully render their utilitarian subjects. However, *Tampa 11* was an even greater technical triumph, bringing together the two industrial processes of blueprint and sepia into one image which resolves their chemical incompatibility and whose straightforward composition belies the level of effort involved in its creation.<sup>4</sup>

Rauschenberg's work with blueprint at Graphicstudio would continue to have profound reverberations decades later. Christian Marclay, after viewing the *Made in Tampa* series while in residence at the studio in the early 2000s, was inspired to undertake what would become a tremendous series of unique prints in blueprint, now known as cyanotype. Marclay's work with cyanotype would push the studio to develop new and more stable chemical formulations to achieve an incredible consistency and uniform color stability. Rauschenberg's work with cardboard was situated, in his words, "in a world that is

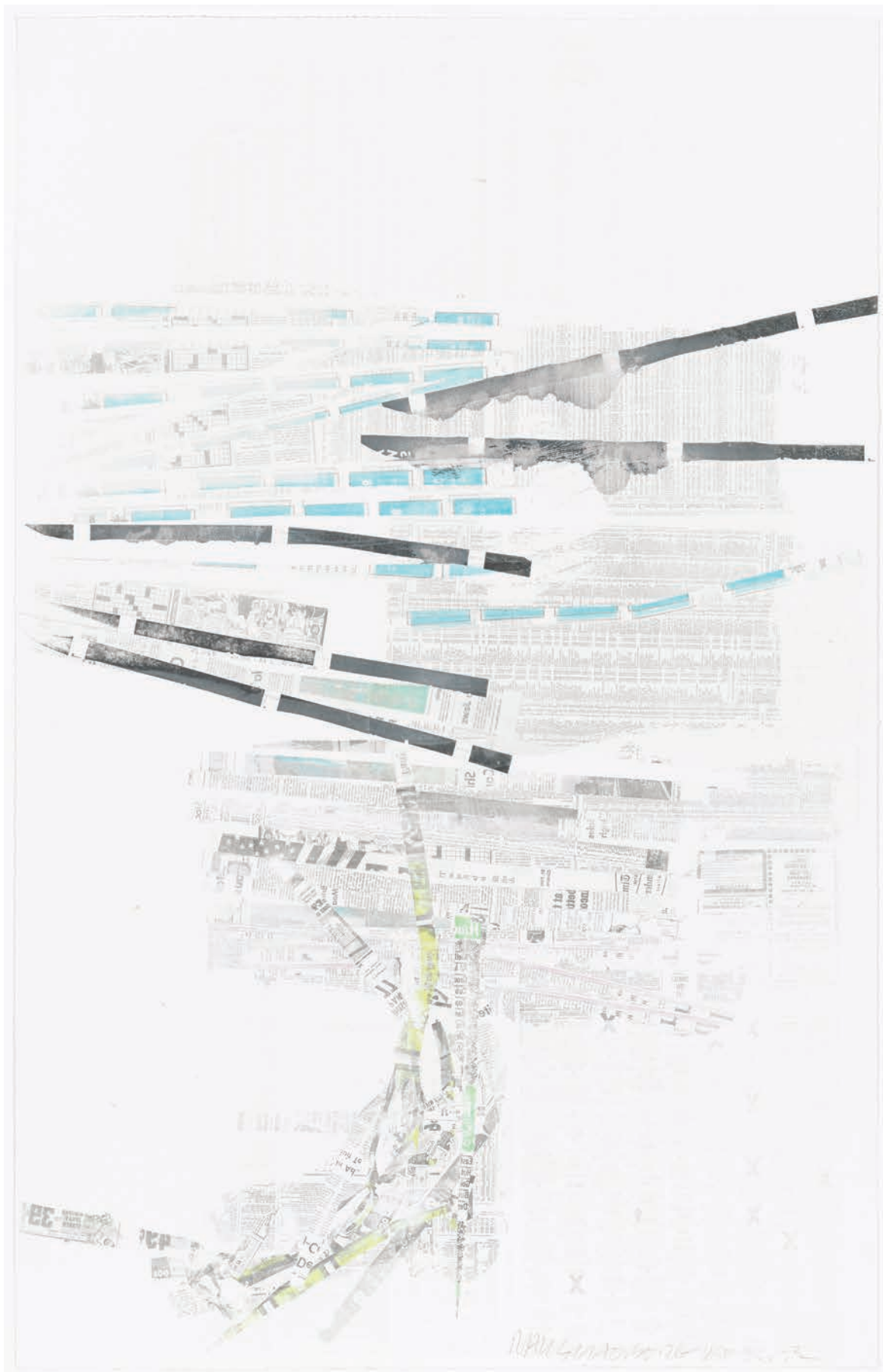
2 Rauschenberg, Robert. *Cardbirds*. Gemini G.E.L., 1971.

3 Baro, Gene. *Graphicstudio USA: An Experiment in Art and Education*. Brooklyn Museum, 1978, p. 20.

4 Saff, Donald, and Deli Sacilotto. *Printmaking: History and Process*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, NY, 1978, p. 369.



Robert Rauschenberg, *Made in Tampa: Tampa 11*, 1972. blueprint and sepia photographic process. 29-1/4 x 41-1/4 in. Published by Graphicstudio, University of South Florida Collection. Photo: Will Lytch.



Robert Rauschenberg, *Mangrove*, from *Crops*, 1973. screenprint and solvent transfer. 60-1/2 x 38-1/2 in.  
Published by Graphicstudio, University of South Florida Collection. Photo: Will Lytch.

risking annihilation for the sake of a buck.”<sup>5</sup> Marclay’s cyanotypes continued Rauschenberg’s project and succeed, as scholar Noam M. Elcott describes, “in rendering modernism’s overwhelming accommodation to capitalism uncomfortably visible.”<sup>6</sup> Marclay’s cyanotypes are but one example of the strong influence, both formally and conceptually, extending out from Rauschenberg’s work with Saff.

Rauschenberg’s collaboration with Saff and the Graphicstudio team also led to a reconsideration of one of the central tenets of printmaking: the limited edition itself. In the 1973 series *Crops*, Rauschenberg brought another of his recurring working methods to the realm of printmaking. Solvent transfers use a chemical agent to break down inks in printed images, which are then burnished and transferred to a new surface. Rauschenberg, Saff, and the Graphicstudio team used solvent transfer as a printmaking technique with strips and pages of newspapers and magazines sprayed with turpentine.<sup>7</sup> A print could then be made by setting the strips onto paper and running them through a lithography press to apply pressure and transfer the inks. To form an edition, though, the process of arranging the strips and pages of paper would need to be repeated for each print in the edition, and the materials involved could only be used once. This necessitated a reinvented approach to the idea of the limited edition. Each impression of *Cactus*, *Coconut*, *Mangrove*, *Peanuts*, and *Watermelon* varies greatly, maintaining consistency in structural elements and displaying significant diversity

among the newspaper and magazine elements that comprise them. This level of variation within an edition was unheard of, leading one printmaker on the project to question whether the prints in *Crops* even qualified as editions. Rauschenberg was clearly comfortable with them as such, and Graphicstudio now uses the term *edition variée* for editions that display this amount of variation.

### BEYOND TAMPA

In 1982 Saff traveled with Rauschenberg to China, serving as technical assistant for a papermaking project with Xuan papermakers at the Jingxian paper mill in Anhui Province. This trip led to *7 Characters*, a series of unique paper and fabric collages published by Gemini G.E.L. and represented by *Light* in the exhibition. The work is an early example of Rauschenberg’s interest in establishing some form of cultural exchange with countries around the world. *Light* incorporates collaged scraps of posters and fabrics gathered from his trip, the written symbol for “light” formed and pressed out of paper pulp, and the centuries-old techniques of Chinese papermaking. Saff’s studies of Chinese calligraphy under Chiang Yee at Columbia University were put to use when he carved the molds for each paper pulp character in the series. The *7 Characters* series presages what would become a primary motivation of Rauschenberg to connect with other cultures through the creation of art.

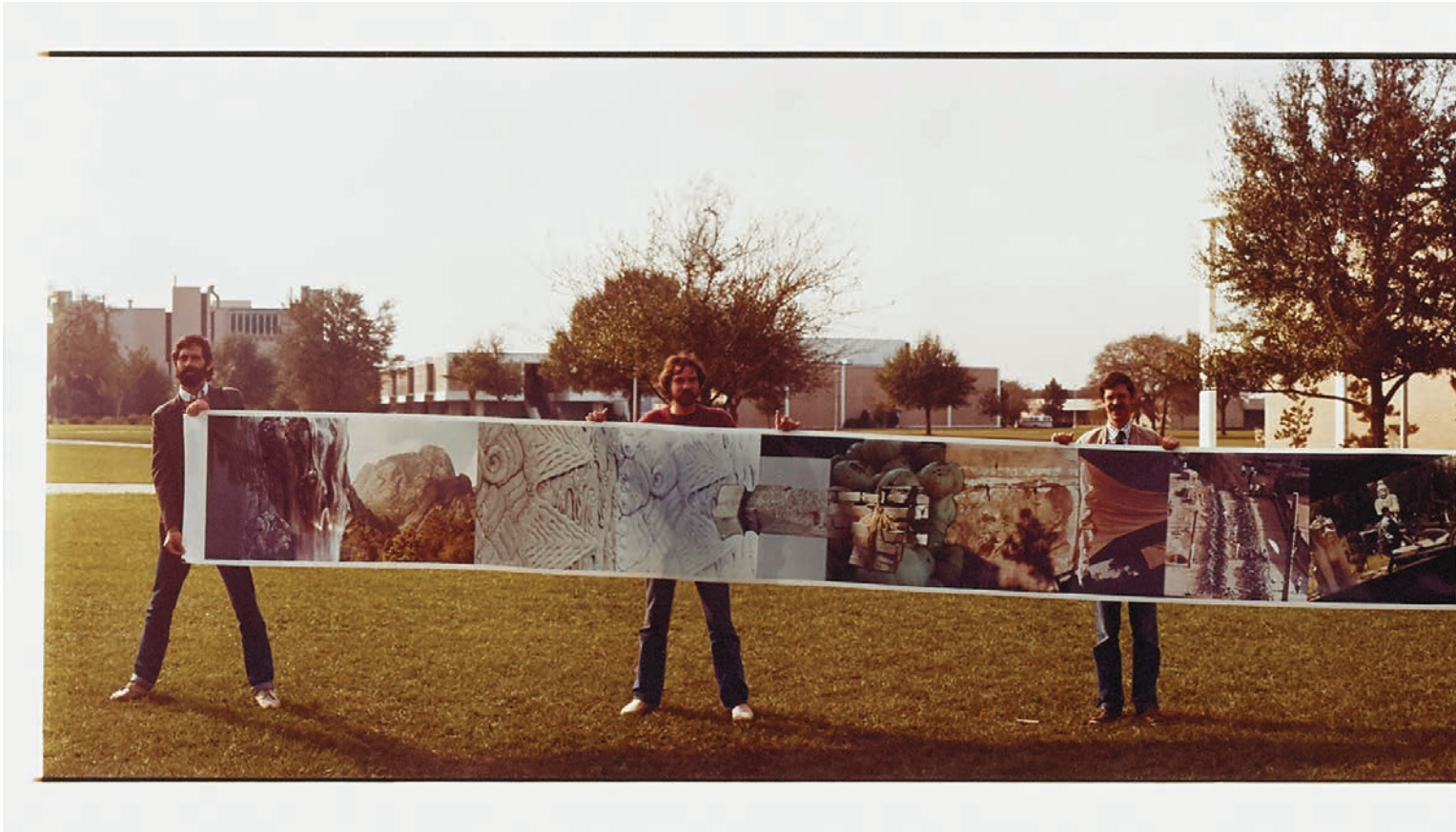
Rauschenberg and Saff’s trip to China led to another watershed artwork titled *Chinese Summerhall*. The 100-foot-long photograph

5 Rauschenberg, *Cardbirds*.

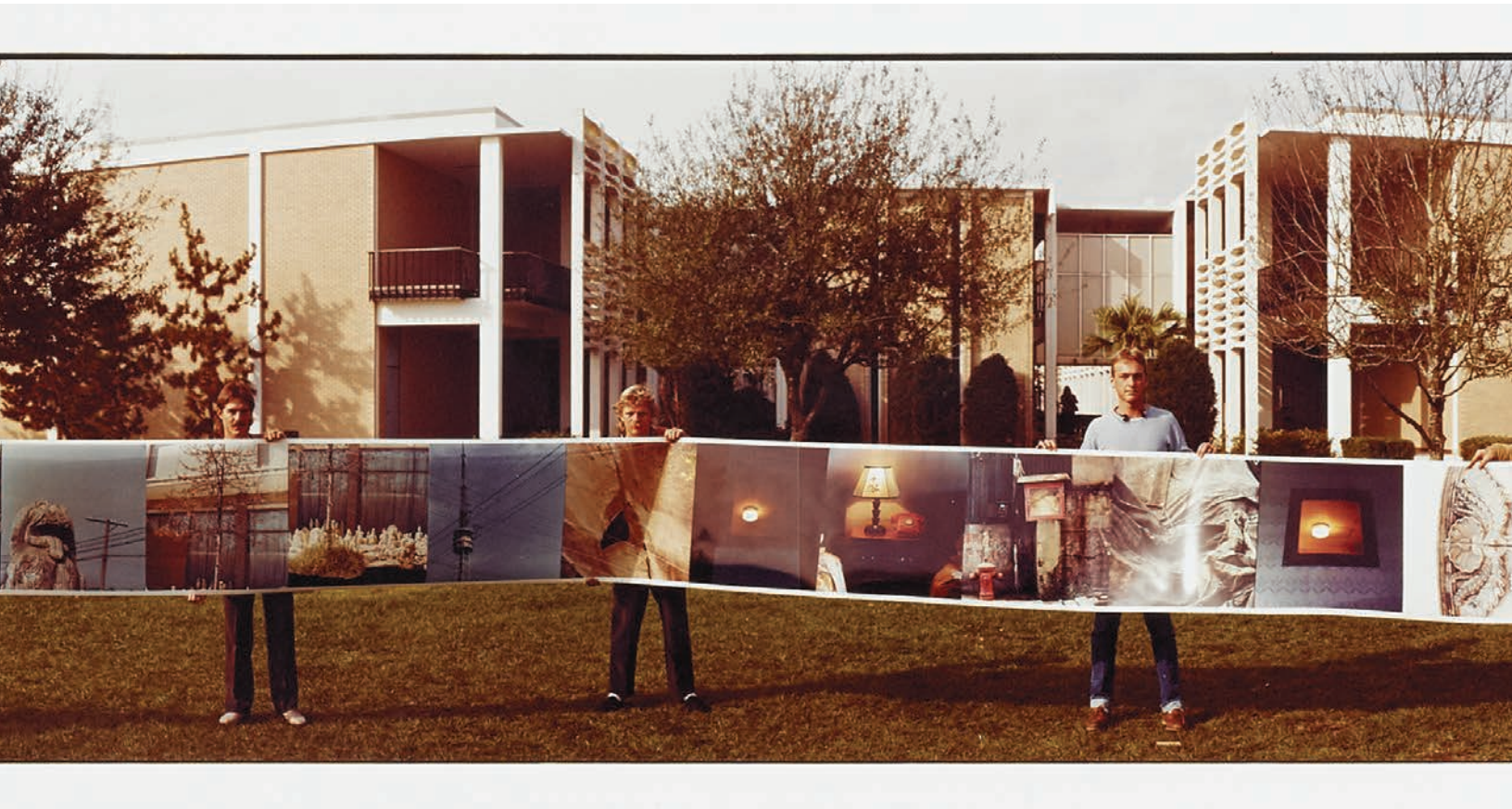
6 Elcott, Noam M. “Untimely Detritus: Christian Marclay’s Cyanotypes.” *Cyanotypes: Christian Marclay*, edited by David Louis Norr, JRP/Ringier, Zürich, 2011, p. x.

7 Fine, Ruth, and Mary Lee Corlett. *Graphicstudio: Contemporary Art from the Collaborative Workshop at University of South Florida*. National Gallery of Art, 1992, p. 245.





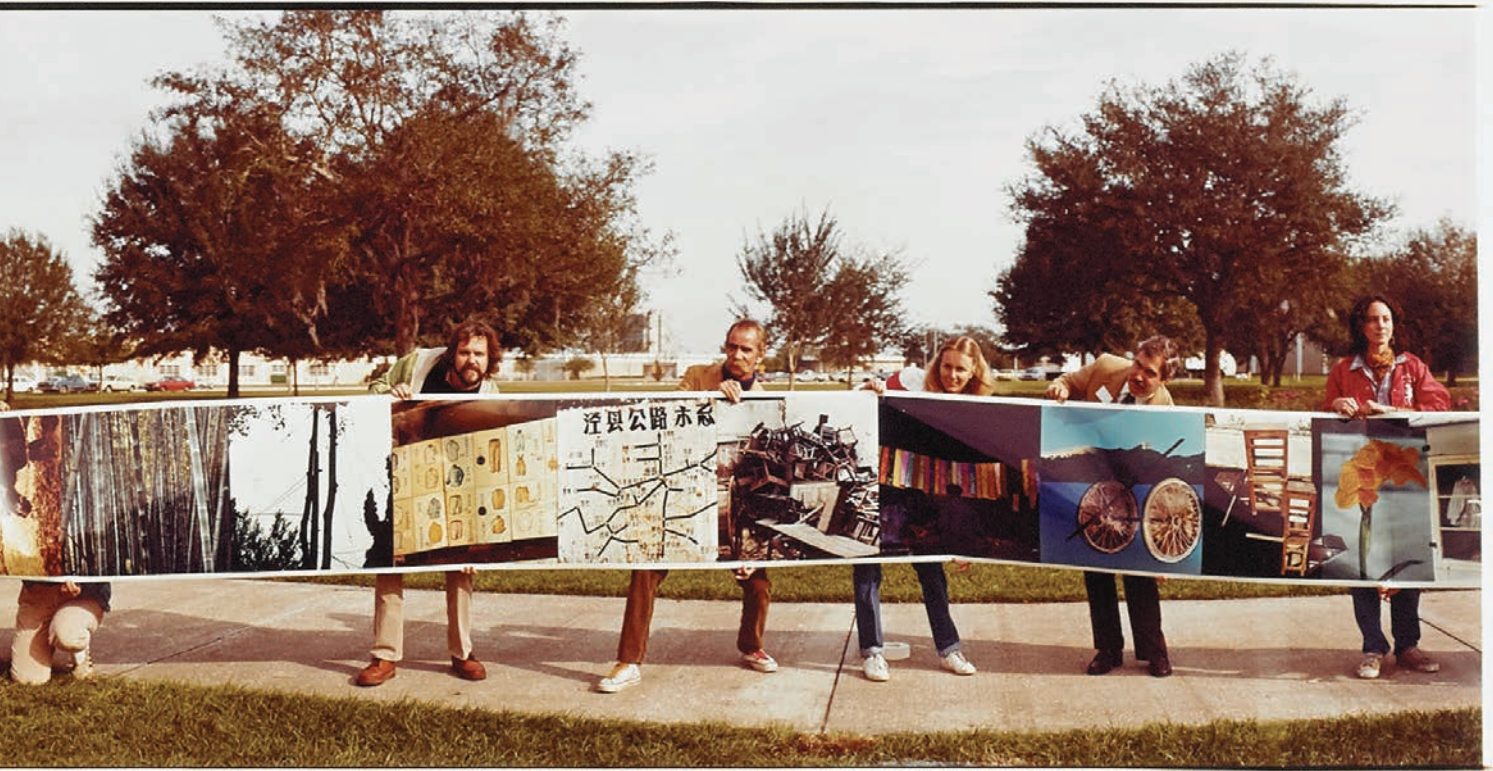




Above and following spread: Oscar Bailey, Robert Rauschenberg "Chinese Summerhall" photographic collage documentation, 1983. chromogenic print. 8 x 65 in. Gift of the Artist, University of South Florida Collection. Photo: Will Lytch.







is a composite of fifty-two images taken by Rauschenberg on the trip. Rauschenberg's only project using chromogenic prints, *Chinese Summerhall* required Rauschenberg, Saff, and the Graphicstudio team to develop new processes and techniques to handle color photography at this scale. Working in sections, the photo paper had to be protected from light in a specially designed dispenser, unspooling it from a roll in keeping with its experience as a form of a scroll.<sup>8</sup>

On this 1982 trip to China, Rauschenberg was particularly struck by his exchanges with a chef who was cooking in the "VIP compound" set up by the Chinese government. Despite being only twenty miles away, the chef was unable get permission to see his family.<sup>9</sup> This experience crystallized the importance of communication on a global scale as the genesis of the Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange project, referred to as ROCI. Making the exchange of "art and facts" a central tenet of the project, Rauschenberg viewed ROCI as a celebration of difference and an opportunity to work toward world peace using the power of art to "seduc[e] us into creative mutual understandings for the benefit of all."<sup>10</sup>

Rauschenberg collaborated with Saff and the Graphicstudio team on four sculpture editions as part of the ROCI project. *Araucan Mastaba* was created as part of ROCI Chile, *Tibetan Garden Song* was developed for ROCI Tibet, *Bamhue* was part of ROCI Japan, and

*Fifth Force* was created as part of the idea for a ROCI Italy exhibition which did not come to pass. Each sculpture incorporates elements of personal and cultural significance from Rauschenberg's trips to each country.

The collaborative relationship between Saff and Rauschenberg also extended beyond Saff's tenure at Graphicstudio. Two works are included in the exhibition from Saff's collaboration with Rauschenberg on objects for the ROCI USA project, produced with the help of Graphicstudio studio manager and master printer Tom Pruitt. *Pegasits* and *Seminole Host* use a process Rauschenberg coined "fire wax" that involves pigmented wax that is painted or screenprinted onto polished metal. Three works in the exhibition illustrate Saff's continued collaboration with Rauschenberg outside of the ROCI project. *Splayed* and *Occur* are examples of further exploration in the fire wax process to incorporate transfers of photographic images that seem to float on a ground of white wax. The *Eco-Echo* series of sculptures were created in the form of windmills whose blades are made of aluminum and Lexan. Rauschenberg's environmental concerns led Saff to develop sonar activations for the sculptures, reducing energy use as they are activated only when nearby movement is sensed.

## BEFORE TAMPA

The earliest example of Rauschenberg's work in *OFFSET* is also the most recent example of Don Saff's continued presence and influence at USF.

8 Fine and Corlett, *Graphicstudio*, p. 255.

9 "Donald Saff: Full Transcript." *Robert Rauschenberg Oral History Project*, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, [www.rauschenbergfoundation.org/artist/oral-history/donald-saff](http://www.rauschenbergfoundation.org/artist/oral-history/donald-saff)

10 Rauschenberg, Robert. "Tobago Statement." *Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange*, edited by Mary Yakush, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, 1991, p. 154.







Robert Rauschenberg, *Eco-Echo VIII*, 1992-93. acrylic and screenprinting ink on aluminum and Lexan, with sonar-activated motor. 88 x 73 x 26 in. Collection of Ruth and Don Saff. Image Courtesy Saff Tech Arts, Photo: George Holzer.





Robert Rauschenberg, *Splayed (Shales)*, 1994. fire wax with transfer on canvas mounted on board with painted aluminum frame. 60 x 48 x 1-1/2 in. Collection of Ruth and Don Saff. Image Courtesy Saff Tech Arts, Photo: George Holzer.

*Scatole Personali* is part of a series of artworks created by Rauschenberg in the early 1950s during travels in Italy and North Africa with fellow artist Cy Twombly. The small wooden box containing beads, stones, fabric, soil, and the desiccated body of a winged insect is part of a series of works that prefigure Rauschenberg's "Combines" artworks, which broke down the barriers between painting and sculpture and marked a fundamental transformation of contemporary art. *Scatole Personali* is exceedingly rare due to Rauschenberg's decision to cast many similar sculptures into the Arno River, following the advice of a particularly harsh Italian critic amid the largely negative reception to their exhibition at the Galleria d'Arte Contemporanea in Florence in 1953. Rauschenberg carried only a few *Scatole Personali* with him back to the United States by plane.

Italian for "personal box," the *Scatole Personali* artworks mark an important period in Rauschenberg's life, coming after his separation from Susan Weil and before the start of his renowned romantic and artistic relationship with Jasper Johns in 1953. Saff's donation of the artwork also marks the ongoing relationship between Saff and USF. In his words, "the global reach of the Institute for Research in Art and the appreciation consistently demonstrated by the academic and Tampa community would make many the beneficiaries of this iconic work. I am delighted with *Scatole's* new home."

Beginning and ending the exhibition is the 1968 offset lithograph *Autobiography*. The print documents Rauschenberg's life up to that point both visually and through a spiral of autobiographical text recounting what he viewed as the most important events in his life. Massive in scale, it was first displayed

as a 17-foot-tall vertical print at the Whitney Museum of American Art. Its massive scale also applies to its method of production—the print was made in an edition of 2000 on a billboard printing press. Much like *Chinese Summerhall*, the work is an example of Rauschenberg's efforts to place his work in context with his audience. Instead of referencing a scroll, *Autobiography* takes the form of a billboard, a familiar sight among the urban environment of Rauschenberg's New York home at the time.

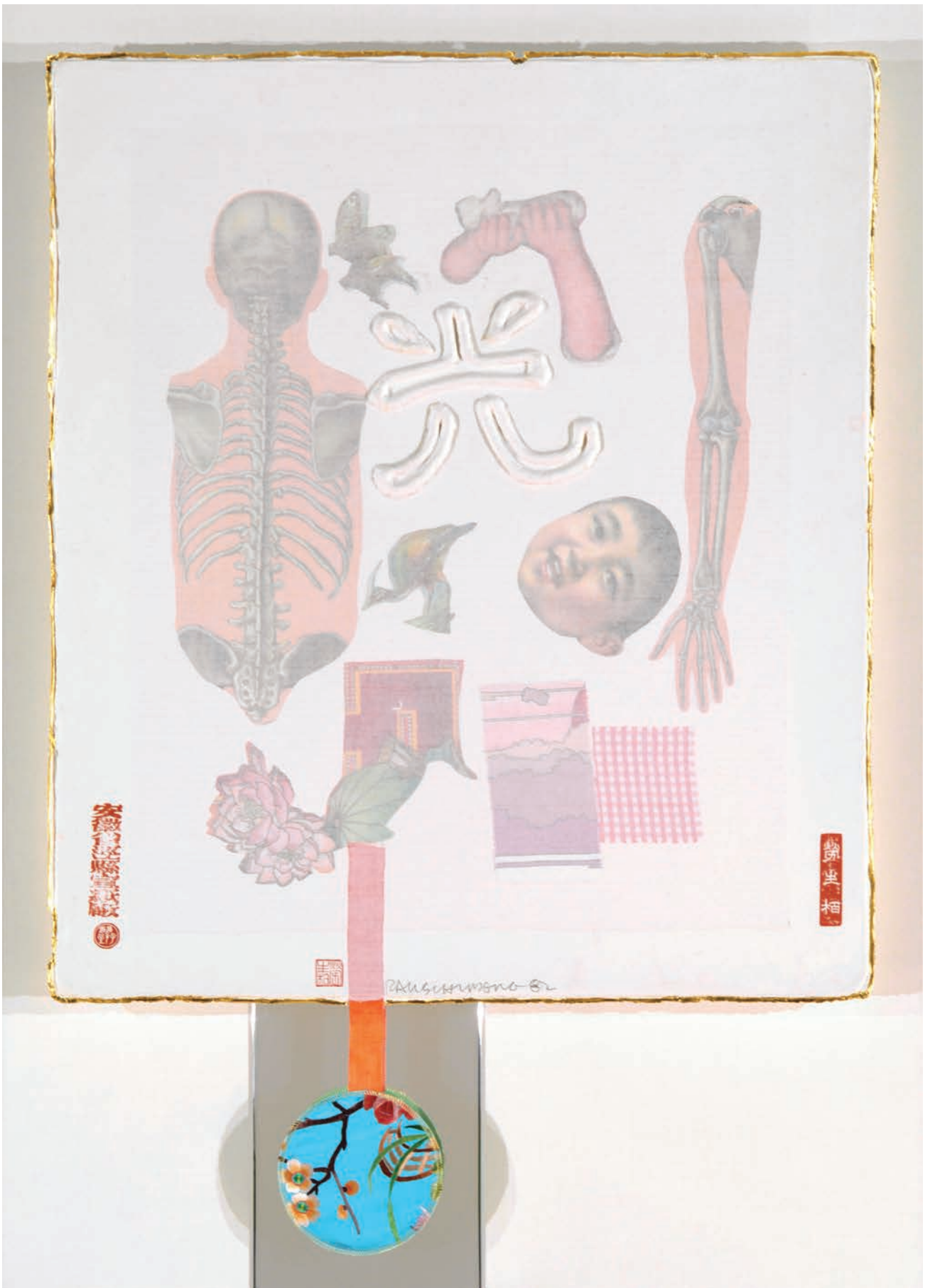
### RETURN TO TAMPA

The remarkable quality of the works included in *OFFSET: Robert Rauschenberg at USF Graphicstudio* give testament to the exceptional nature of the collaborative relationship between Donald Saff, Robert Rauschenberg, and the printmakers, photographers, and sculptors at Graphicstudio. The histories, creative context, and resonances of the works resulting from this association provide another dimension to the exhibition, which is a unique opportunity to present some of these works in the place of their creation at the University of South Florida.

—

Mark Fredricks  
Research Administrator  
USF Institute for Research in Art  
Contemporary Art Museum and Graphicstudio





Robert Rauschenberg, *Light*, from *7 Characters*, 1982. unique paper and fabric collage. 41 x 26-1/2 x 2 in.  
Anonymous gift, Published by Gemini G.E.L., University of South Florida Collection. Photo: Peter Foe.



Fig. 1. Robert Rauschenberg presenting "ROCI Announcement Print" (1984) to United Nations Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar on the occasion of the inauguration of the Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange (ROCI), at the United Nations. Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York. Photo: Unattributed, 1984.

# COMMUNICATING 'WORLDLY' THROUGH ART: RAUSCHENBERG'S OVERSEAS CULTURE INTERCHANGE

John R. Blakinger

In a photograph from 1984 (fig. 1), the artist Robert Rauschenberg stands with United Nations Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar at UN Headquarters in New York for a public press conference. The image is surprising—the grinning artist and the bewildered, somewhat uncertain, diplomat make for a thoroughly unusual pairing. Pérez de Cuéllar was a major world political figure with a storied career in international relations, one that brought him to the pinnacle of the diplomatic profession. He served as the Peruvian ambassador to Switzerland, the Soviet Union, Poland, and Venezuela before leading the UN; as Secretary-General of the UN, he managed mediations between the United Kingdom and Argentina following the Falklands War and addressed diplomatic crises worldwide, in Morocco, Croatia, and Cyprus, among other locales. What is he doing with the artist Robert Rauschenberg?

The photograph documents the beginning of one of the most fascinating and complex creative projects in Rauschenberg's prolific career. It was there, at UN Headquarters, alongside the UN Secretary-General, that Rauschenberg announced the launch of an ambitious new endeavor: the Rauschenberg

Overseas Culture Interchange, commonly known by the acronym ROCI. Initially imagined in the 1970s as a standard traveling exhibition with a fixed checklist of works—what the artist first described as the “Rauschenberg Round the World Tour”—the project became considerably more complex in the years that followed. Under the direction of Donald Saff (fig. 2), Rauschenberg's most significant collaborator in this period and an important innovator in American printmaking at the University of South Florida's Graphicstudio, the project was re-conceptualized as a series of “culture interchanges” with eleven countries worldwide. As ROCI Artistic Director, Saff assumed the essential role of organizing the artist's visits with host countries, where Rauschenberg embarked on elaborate exchanges. He learned craft techniques from local artisans, like the traditional papermaking techniques observed at the Xuan Paper Mill in Jingxian, China; encountered materials with regional significance, like the copper mined in the Andes Mountains of Chile; and appropriated found materials, from Samarkand fabrics to cheap product packaging and advertising broadsheets. Even detritus littering city streets was elevated, becoming the stuff of art. With camera in tow, Rauschenberg photographed



the people and places he encountered during these visits, building a vast image archive reflecting his travels that he sent home to his studio on Captiva Island, Florida.

Back home in the US, Rauschenberg created new works with the diffuse material he had collected abroad. These ROCI works were intended to respond directly to each host country, to capture the aesthetic experience of the cities Rauschenberg visited in person. They employed Rauschenberg's iconic approach, developed through experiments at Black Mountain College and his innovation of the combine, and fused high and low visual culture and multiple artistic media in a single work of art—from the debris of urban life to discrete painted, sculpted, printed, and photographed elements. The results were uniquely layered assemblages. Images and materials were juxtaposed in provocative arrangements, both in tension and in complementary constellations, creating narrative provocations. The ROCI works were heterogenous and open, defying any single style; specific works made in response to different countries often looked completely unique, keyed to the experiences Rauschenberg had in each locale. After creating these works, Rauschenberg sent them back to host countries for ROCI exhibitions at major national museums; Rauschenberg would follow, attending each opening and often engaging in dialogues with artists, writers, and students.

ROCI was therefore structured as interchange, as a two-way give-and-take between nations through the process of artistic creation and reception. The ROCI name symbolized these ambitions. A clever play on words, it referenced Rauschenberg's beloved pet turtle

Rocky, who famously starred in the artist's 1965 performance *Spring Training* and was a regular presence in Rauschenberg's studio. But the project referenced Rocky in order to iconographically signify a more universal concept: the world turtle, a key feature of Chinese, Hindu, and Native American mythology, which all include variations of a tortoise that carries the weight of the world on its back. The world turtle became an essential component of ROCI's visual culture, emblazoned on letterhead, posters, stationery, and exhibition catalog covers (fig. 3). It symbolized the immense global scope of the project; in a way, Rauschenberg—and Saff—was the world turtle, carrying the weight of the project on his own back.

Indeed, the itinerary Rauschenberg and Saff prepared was remarkable. Destinations selected for ROCI exchanges focused on what Rauschenberg termed "sensitive" countries.<sup>1</sup> These were geopolitically isolated nations, often closed to the United States, which faced considerable political and economic challenges. In chronological order, stops included the capital cities of Mexico, Chile, Venezuela, China, Tibet, Japan, Cuba, the Soviet Union, East Germany, and Malaysia. Many of these countries were controlled by oppressive totalitarian regimes or authoritarian dictatorships and had severe limits on freedom of expression, including state-controlled media systems, an apparatus of censorship and intimidation, and limited artistic opportunity. They were complex sites for a visiting artist. Some, like China, Cuba, the Soviet Union, and East Germany, were securely on the far side of the Iron Curtain. Chile was under the dictatorial grip of Augusto Pinochet, who

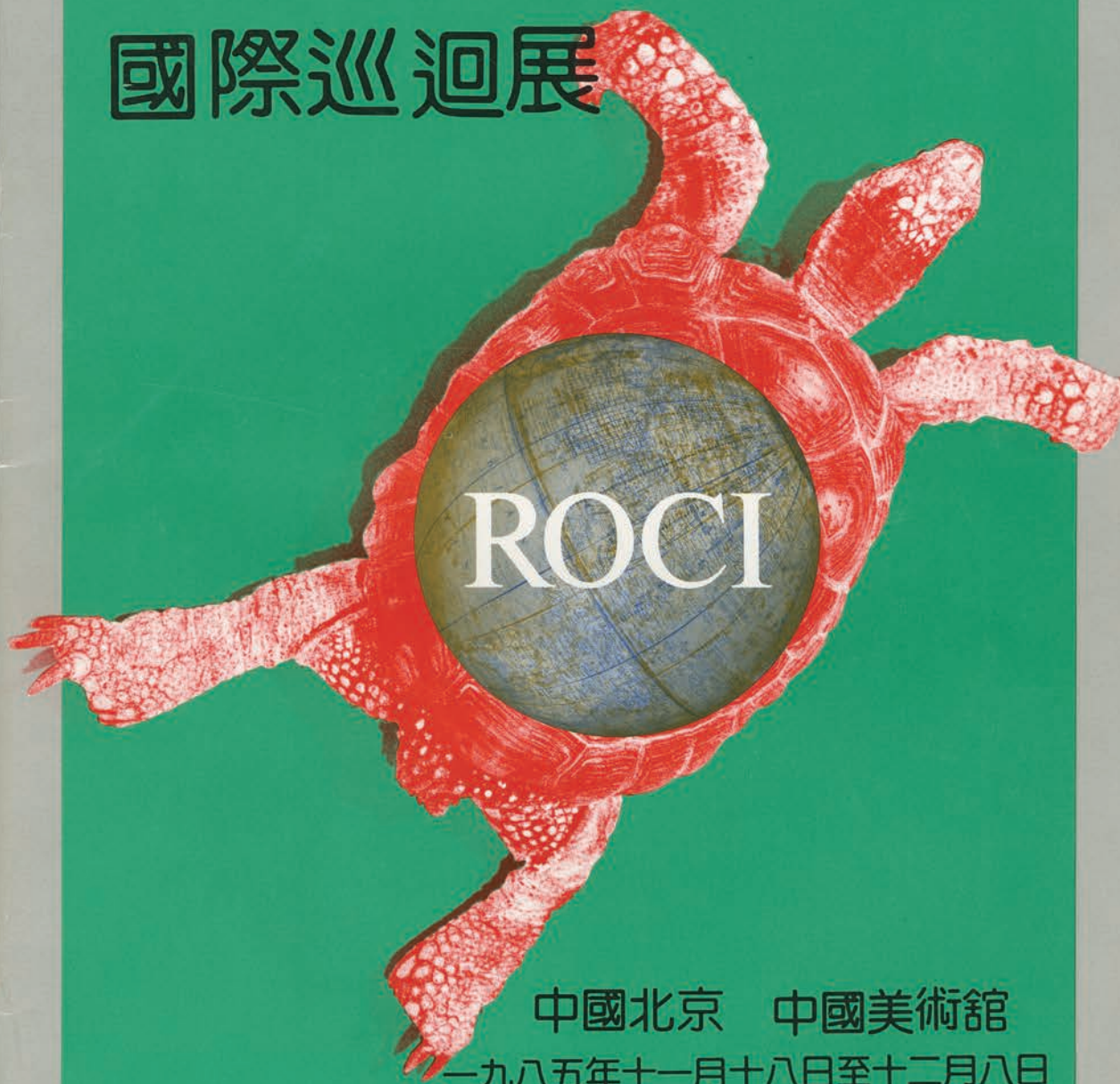
1 Such wording appears repeatedly throughout Rauschenberg's statements about ROCI.



Fig 2. Don Saff and Robert Rauschenberg in the Yellow Mountains, awaiting approval to go to the Xuan Paper Mill to make *7 Characters*. Photograph Collection. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York. Photo: Terry Van Brunt, 1982.



# 勞生柏作品 國際巡迴展



中國北京 中國美術館

一九八五年十一月十八日至十二月八日

中國拉薩 西藏展覽館

一九八五年十二月二日至十二月二十三日

Fig 3. Catalog of an exhibition, *Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange: ROCI CHINA*, held at National Art Museum of China, Beijing, November 18–December 5, 1985; China Lhasa Tibetan Exhibition Center, December 2-23, 1985. Exhibition brochure (China and Tibet) with essay by Donald Saff, text by Wu Zugang, poem by Laba Pingcuo, previously published essay by Robert Hughes, and previously published statement by Rauschenberg. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Library. Creator: ULAE for Robert Rauschenberg, 1985.



came to power in a military coup in 1973; Tibet was claimed by China and occupied by its armed forces; Venezuela was beset with economic crisis due to collapsing oil prices and runaway inflation. In an era of intensified Cold War conflict culminating in the unraveling of the Eastern bloc and fall of the Berlin Wall, ROCI was politically charged—even while Rauschenberg maintained that it had no political agenda, that it was “non-political.”<sup>2</sup> The ROCI team even explored the possibility of visiting countries entangled in significant and active turmoil, like Yugoslavia, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Morocco, Egypt, and South Africa.

As Rauschenberg understood it, the purpose of visiting so-called “sensitive” countries was to use art and exchange as a peacemaking tool. ROCI was fueled by Rauschenberg’s trademark brand of multicultural idealism, a belief that artistic collaboration on its own could change the world for the better. “The purpose is to promote peace through active communication with art,” he declared in the project’s founding document, a 1984 manifesto written by the artist during a Caribbean vacation and known as the “Tobago Statement.” Rauschenberg articulated these goals in grand terms:

The Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange ... is a four-year private project taking, making and exchanging art and facts around the world. Emphasis will be placed on sharing experiences with societies less familiar with non-political ideas or communicating ‘worldly’ through art. A selection of works done in, or influenced by,

participating countries will then continue to travel, including videos, photos, sound, drawings, prints, and catalogues, to the next country, systematically eclipsing the opening exhibit, which functions as a catalyst, enabling the international exhibition and collaboration to exist and grow. I feel strong in my beliefs, based on my varied and widely traveled collaborations, that a one-to-one contact through art contains potent peaceful powers.<sup>3</sup>

The pragmatics of translating idealism into action fell to Saff, who negotiated with foreign governments for access, collaborated with institutions hosting ROCI exhibitions, and secured the participation of diverse cultural figures who authored texts for the catalogs accompanying each show (these included the likes of Mexican poet Octavio Paz, Chinese playwright Zu Zuguang, Chilean writer José Donoso, and Japanese art critic Yoshiaki Tono). Often overlooked as incidental to the art, it was perhaps this aspect of ROCI—the diplomatic work of making it all happen, of collaborating with foreign governments and cultural institutions, some of which were skeptical if not hostile—that was ROCI’s greatest achievement.

The result was an impressive, but also highly fraught, international program. Correspondence between Rauschenberg, Saff, and their associates with the likes of Fidel Castro, Mikhail Gorbachev, and Erich Honecker indicate the significant geopolitical scope of the project; despite its “non-political” framing, the ROCI team was involved in high-level political diplomacy. Operating independently

2 The term appears in his “Tobago Statement,” reproduced in Mary Yakush, ed., *ROCI: Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1991), 154.

3 From the “Tobago Statement,” reproduced in Mary Yakush, ed., *ROCI: Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1991), 154.

of official channels, ROCI gained access to major world leaders, not least at a moment when Cold War polarization was intensifying.

But the response to Rauschenberg's visits was not always warm and welcoming. Critics in Santiago, Chile, perceived the opening of *ROCI Chile* at Santiago's Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes (National Museum of Fine Arts) as a capitulation to Pinochet and his dictatorial regime; the museum represented official state power, as suggested by the endorsement of Rauschenberg's visit by media outlets sympathetic to Pinochet. Critics therefore interpreted his trip to Chile as a form of colonialism, as soft power propaganda intended to reinforce US foreign policy objectives (the US supported Pinochet's military junta in an attempt to limit the spread of communism in Latin America). Such critiques reflected the important revisionist analysis of US cultural efforts during the early Cold War, like the export of American Abstract Expressionism in the 1950s and 1960s, as politically motivated. These criticisms took hold in the reception of ROCI; art critic Roberta Smith famously articulated them at the conclusion of the ROCI project in her review of *ROCI USA*, which opened at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, in 1991. Smith called ROCI both "altruistic and self-aggrandizing," describing it as "cultural imperialism."<sup>4</sup> This charge has continued to structure the historiography of the project to date, even though many artists from the countries Rauschenberg visited continue to cite ROCI as an essential influence on their practice. The legacy of the endeavor was profoundly complex and contradictory.

Ultimately, the pattern of the art world as we know it—a system defined by a globalized art economy, an ever-expanding itinerary of international biennials, and new access for artists across the globe—owes much to the model pioneered single-handedly by Rauschenberg and Saff. They anticipated the form the globalized art world would take in the twenty-first century, but decades earlier. Art historians have struggled to interpret ROCI—to make sense of its grandiose, even over-the-top ambitions; its vast, unmanageable archive of collected source material; its years of disparate artistic output—and yet, it is this impact that endures. The global art world ROCI created, with its inherent complexities and contradictions, was its most significant work of art.

—

John R. Blakinger

Endowed Associate Professor of Contemporary Art

University of Arkansas

4 Roberta Smith, "Robert Rauschenberg, At Home and Abroad," *New York Times* (6 August 1991): C11.



Robert Rauschenberg, *Araucan Mastaba/ROCI Chile*, 1986. screenprinted enamel with painted editions on polished natural aluminum over a plywood substructure, with sterling silver and lapis lazuli. 20-5/8 x 22 x 22 in. Published by Graphicstudio, University of South Florida Collection. Photo: Will Lytch.





# UBIQUITY AS LEGACY: OR HOW ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG CHANGED EVERYTHING AND EVERYBODY IN ART

Christian Viveros-Fauné

Some artists leave an important mark; only a handful deliver the kind of legacy handed down by Robert Rauschenberg, the twentieth century's art-gospel-spreading, medium-challenging, style-switching creative Johnny Appleseed. Born to a fundamentalist Christian family in 1925 in Port Arthur, Texas, Rauschenberg made transformational, age-defying artwork in New York City by age 25 in 1950. By the time the trendsetting polymath died in his artistic idyll of Captiva Island, Florida, in 2008, at 82, he had anticipated just about every modern art movement after Abstract Expressionism—from Minimalism to Conceptualism, from Pop to performance.

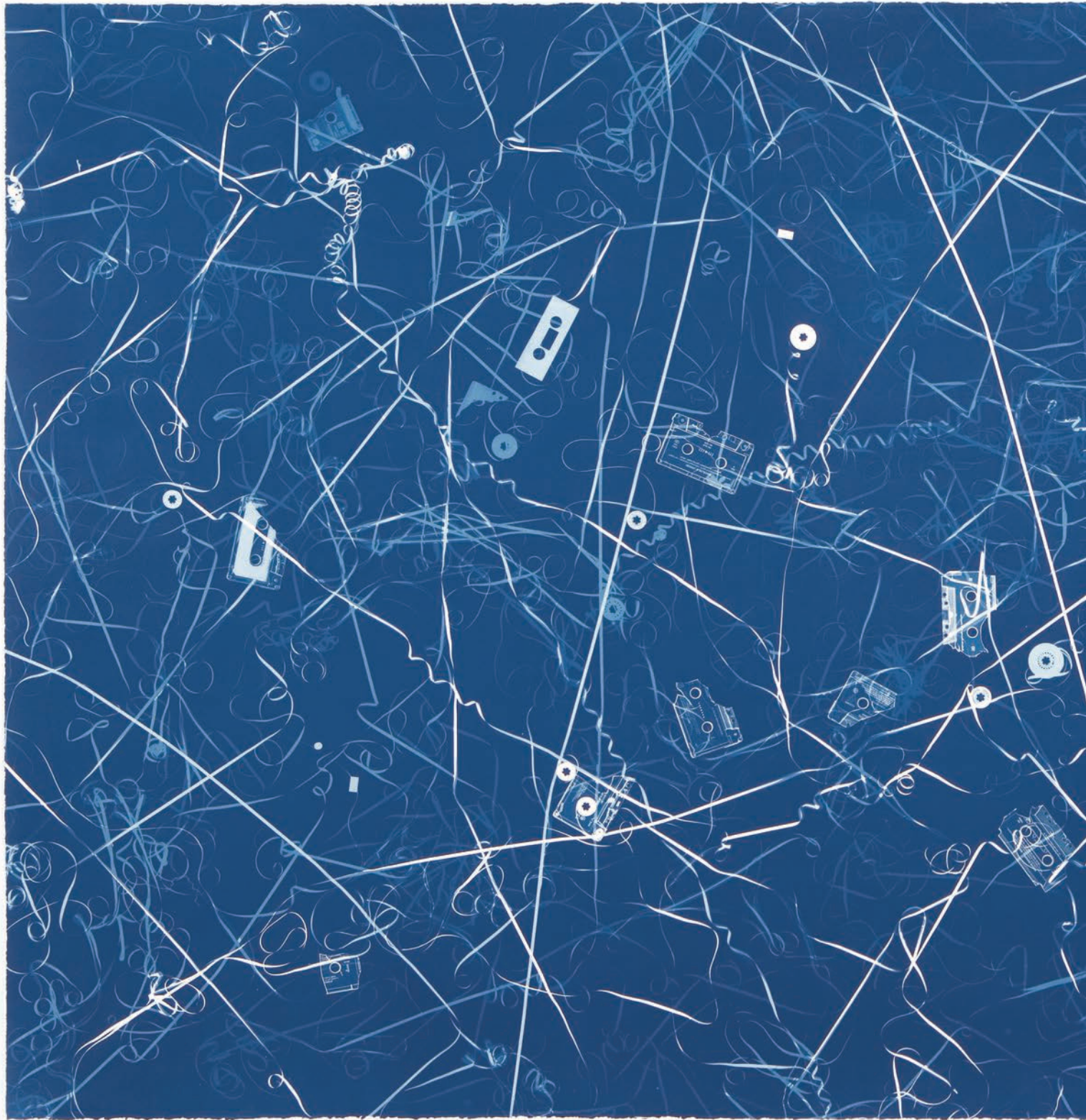
A champion innovator and virtuoso tinkerer in the vein of generative giants Leonardo da Vinci and Pablo Picasso, Rauschenberg is justly known today both for being spectacularly influential and for possessing an outsize vision. For the man baptized Milton Ernest Rauschenberg—Robert was the oddly normcore *nom d'artiste* he adopted after attending school on the G.I. Bill—art functioned primarily as a way of “working with other people,” by which he meant artists like Jasper Johns and Cy Twombly, composers John Cage and Morton Feldman, choreographers Merce Cunningham

and Trisha Brown, and arts publishers Donald Saff and his crack Graphicstudio team of printers. Crucially, his lifelong synergies also illustrated a central article of his secular faith. Rather than treat advances like intellectual property, he firmly believed in creative communism: “Ideas are not real estate.”

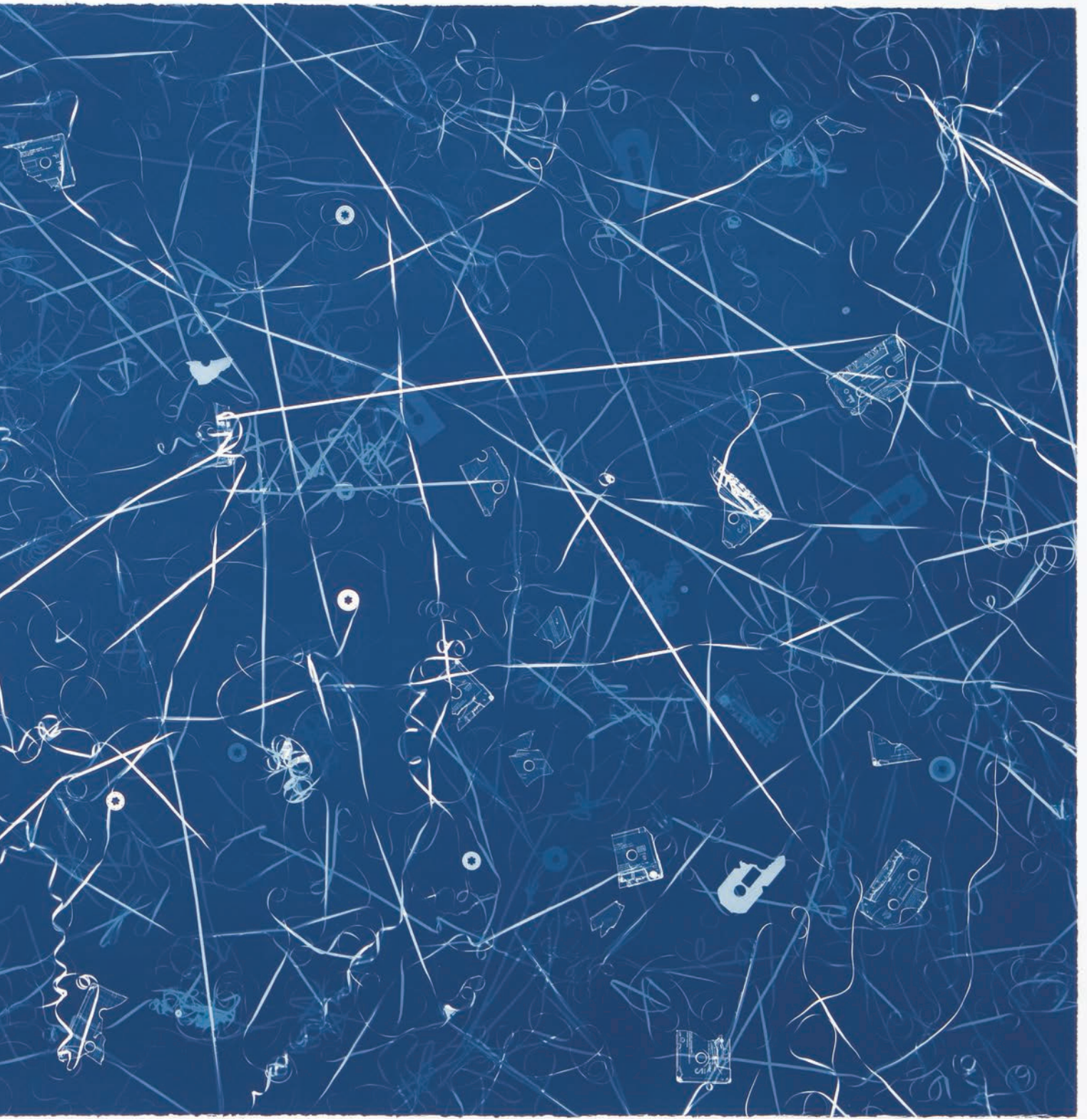
Rauschenberg's influence has been so pervasive for so long it often appears undetectable—like the pull of the earth's rotation. Starting in the 1950s, at the apex of an action painting movement he helped bury, he began experimenting with a multimedia approach that served as a harbinger for what was to come in art in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. According to MoMA curator Leah Dickerman, Rauschenberg's entire oeuvre evokes “a pre-history of contemporary practice” like a box of toy prototypes might model the future of art. “So many of the things that you see in his work,” she enjoined, “a performative bent, interdisciplinary practice, an egalitarian approach to a pair of socks or a brushstroke—are all ways of working that Rauschenberg made possible.”

If Rauschenberg liked smashing molds—it can be argued that noncompliance was









Christian Marclay, *All over (Rush, Barbra Streisand, Tina Turner, and Others)*, 2008. cyanotype. 51-1/2 x 100 in.  
Published by Graphicstudio, University of South Florida Collection. Photo: Will Lytch.





his signature style—it should come as no surprise that artists who embrace him turn out to be expert iconoclasts. His receptivity and penchant for rule breaking are his most profound legacy. For generations of artists, including those who participate in *OFFSET* as legatees, Rauschenberg’s restless code-switching with respect to medium and materials provides a skeleton key to a radically fecund, anti-formalist openness to working the teeming seam between art and life—an anti-method the Port Arthur native described as “closer to collaboration with materials than any kind of conscious manipulation and control.”

For Rochelle Feinstein, whose unique hand-painted screenprints recall Rauschenberg’s love of vernacular speech and accessible media—in her case, oil and canvas—his “work stood as a model for engagement with event, with material, with life and lives, through uncensored art making.” Titled *Research Park Project* (2014), her seventeen Graphicstudio collaborations involve both an expansive grasp of the language of painting, expressed in overlapping multicolored phrases, slogans and figures of speech, but also conversations encountered, overheard and recorded. Featuring a wry allusion to a mixture of academic and real estate nomenclature, the titling of Feinstein’s series alludes to the location of Graphicstudio in the University of South Florida’s Research Park. Feinstein additionally razzes the scientism that is so prevalent in American universities, by labeling creative activity “research.”

Rauschenberg’s multiple experiments with photography find echoes in contemporary cameraless photography, most notably in

Christian Marclay’s cyanotype *Allover* (*Rush, Barbra Streisand, Tina Turner, and Others*) (2008). Using hundreds of thrift store cassettes, the Swiss-American artist laid strands of magnetic tape across large sheets of prepared blueprint paper, simulating (parodying?) Jackson Pollock’s “allover” painting technique. After exposing the sheets to a high-powered ultraviolet lamp, often multiple times, his compositions invariably resemble powerful collage works by Rauschenberg—among them, the multicolor intaglio on fabric works produced at Graphicstudio, such as *Switchboard* (1974), but also the early full body photograms he made with his then wife, Susan Weil, from 1949 to 1951.

“Danger lies in forgetting,” Rauschenberg said apropos of a 1969 *TIME* magazine commission that resulted in his celebrated collage *Signs* (it was later issued as a screenprint). Rejected for publication, that work summarized the decade’s most important events in news clippings: U.S. soldiers on patrol in Vietnam; student anti-war protests; astronaut Buzz Aldrin walking on the moon; the death of legendary singer Janis Joplin; the murdered American leaders President John F. Kennedy, Senator Robert Kennedy and the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. Using a similar collage process, Bahamian artist Tavares Strachan’s admixes anti-canonical images in *Happy World* (2022). Where the once 44-year-old Caucasian artist sought to recall the “love, terror, violence of the last ten years,” the younger Black creator marshals an even more sweeping set of materials—images of pink flamingos, the cover of a May, 1961, *Ebony* magazine and illustrated entries from a book of untold stories—to underpin his own exhaustive A-to-Z





Bosco Sodi, *Untitled from Sun Paintings*, 2021. oil paint on old dry chile sack. 45-1/4 x 24-3/4 in.  
Gift of the artist, University of South Florida Collection. Photo: Sergio Lopez.





Robert Rauschenberg, *Made in Tampa Clay Pieces: Tampa Clay Piece 5*, 1972. clay and fiberglass with collage. 40-1/4 x 22-1/4 x 4-1/2 in.  
Published by Graphicstudio, University of South Florida Collection. Photo: Peter Foe.

project: a memorial to hidden knowledge he's titled *The Encyclopedia of Invisibility*.

Of all the Rauschenberg utterances that feel fresh as a newspaper headline, none are more compelling than this: "I think a picture is more like the real world when it's made out of the real world." The aftershocks of that statement manifest like cracks on the art world's plaster face, as is evident in the work of two contemporary Mexican artists, Bosco Sodi and Narsiso Martinez. Despite a shared affinity for resourcefulness, both artists couldn't be more different. Sodi, for one, approaches Rauschenberg's democratic spirit through a lively engagement with demotic materials. His 2020 *Sun Paintings* were made in Oaxaca when canvas was unavailable during the global pandemic, so the artist floated red and orange orbs atop recycled burlap chili sacks in a gesture both thrifty and cosmological. Their economy of means bears more than a passing likeness to Rauschenberg's *Tampa Clay Piece 5* (1972).

Narsiso Martinez, for his part, has recovered political imagery from the remaindered stack of art history textbooks by artfully rethinking a basic support for his pictures. Drawn directly from the artist's own experience as a migrant farmworker, the Oaxaca-born painter's compositions focus on people he describes as "the men and women who toil in the fields picking the produce we consume." Rendered atop discarded produce boxes with the commercial graphics showing through, his hoodie-wearing, open-faced likenesses provide a conceptual twist to both Social Realism and standard-issue collages. Besides making visible the working conditions of the American farmworker, Martinez's pictures

also channel Rauschenberg's liberating art-from-anything credo in ways that resemble, among other works, the series of vintage wall reliefs the late artist made from found cardboard boxes in 1971-72.

Finally, few works encompass Rauschenberg's conception that art should provide "a record of the immediate environment and time" as much as *Compass, Untitled (Set One), Untitled (Set Two), Untitled (Set Three)*—a group of etchings by the artist's frequent collaborator and friend Trisha Brown. Produced at Graphicstudio in 2006, the works conjure efforts the celebrated choreographer shared with Rauschenberg, but which he pioneered as far back as the 1950s in his famous combine *Monogram* (1955-59) and in his 1963 performance *Pelican*, immortalized in the three-panel lithograph *Autobiography* (1968). By placing her feet directly on the plate, she rendered her marks as both footprints and dance movements; impressions that are not just timely but improvisational in ways that resemble the familiar (a dance step diagram) while continually slipping the knot of denotative language.

With a protean artist like Rauschenberg, much of contemporary art history reads like a bunch of footnotes—information printed at the bottom of the page of some endless assigned reading. It takes an exhibition like *OFFSET* to make his ubiquitous, oxygen-like, he-changed-everything-and-everybody legacy come alive again.

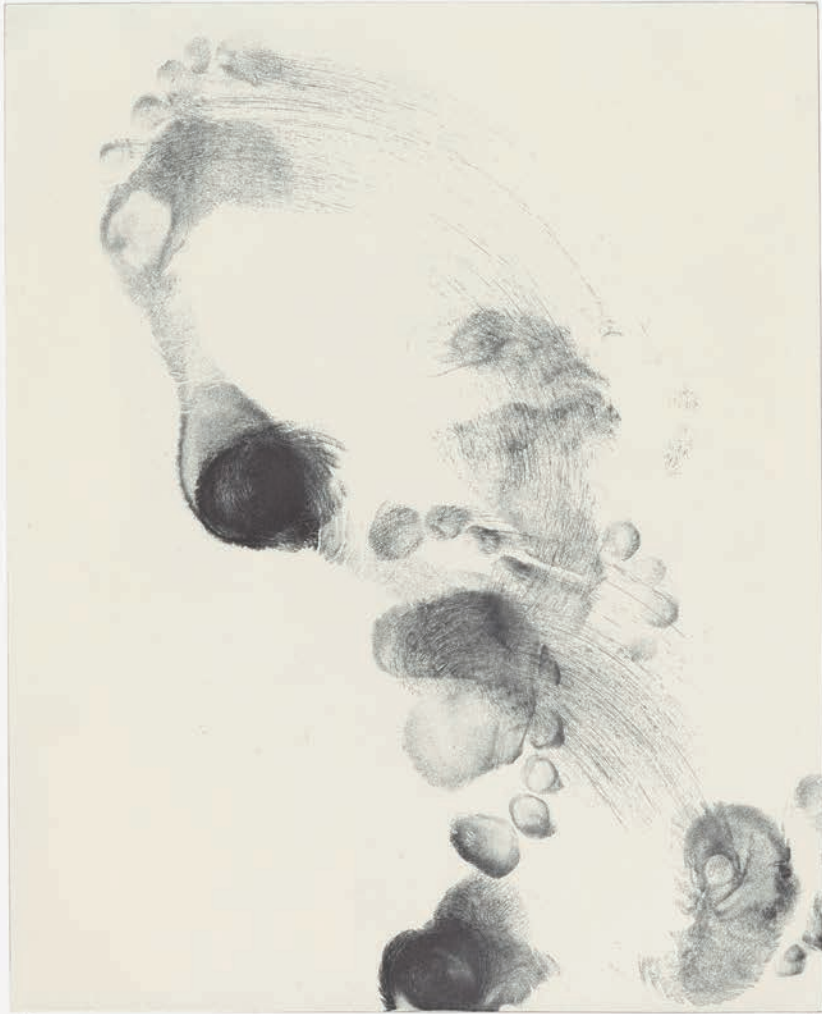
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Christian Viveros-Fauné  
Curator-at-Large  
USF Contemporary Art Museum



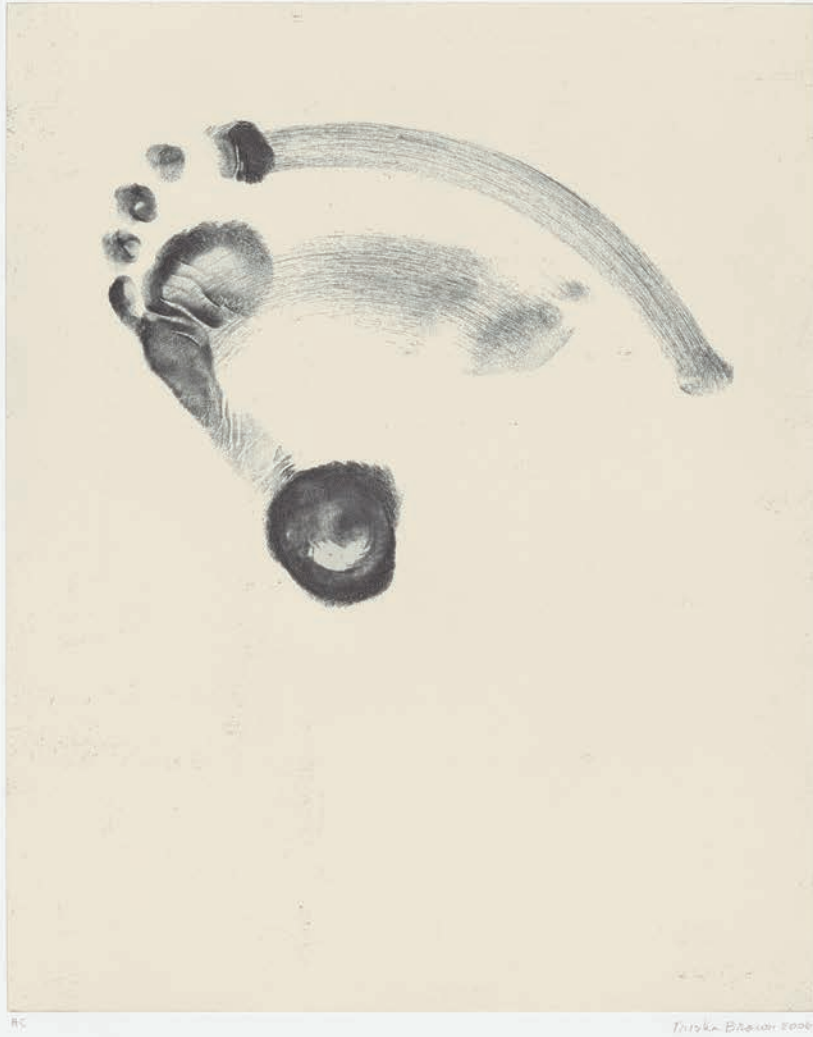


Narsiso Martinez, *Cara Cara*, 2021. ink, charcoal, gouache, collage, and matte gel on produce cardboard box. 43 x 35 in. The Edelman Ontiveros Family Collection. Image: Courtesy of the Artist and Charlie James Gallery, Los Angeles. © 2021 Narsiso Martinez; Photo © 2021 Yubo Dong @ofphotostudio.



HC

Trisha Brown 2008



Facing page, above, and following page: Trisha Brown, *Untitled (Set One)*, 2006. softground etching with relief roll. 25-1/2 x 22 in. (each of three).  
Published by Graphicstudio, University of South Florida Collection. Photos: Will Lytch.





ATP

False Blow

# TAMPA CLAY PIECES

Callan Donahoe

*Tampa Clay Pieces* are a series of five clay artworks completed by Robert Rauschenberg in 1972 and 1973. Rauschenberg proposed using clay to replicate cardboard boxes after a discussion with Alan Eaker, another artist and later director of Graphicstudio. The playful deception of these sculptures relies on convincing details, such as the transportation labels, crumpled composition, and packaging tape.

To reproduce these exact details, Rauschenberg, Eaker, and the printmakers at Graphicstudio developed a combination of ceramic and screenprinting techniques. Rauschenberg carefully selected and shaped cardboard boxes into models for his sculptures, which were then used to create plaster molds. A precise blend of Ocamulgee Low Fire Red and Lincoln Fire clays provided a smooth and strong structure after firing that mimicked the color and texture of cardboard.<sup>1</sup>

When they completed the first prototype, it was hung in place where Rauschenberg had pinned the original cardboard fragment. Half a day of working in the studio passed

before Rauschenberg realized the cardboard model had been replaced. Delighted by the potential of this project, Rauschenberg went on to create four more sculptures in this suite, each more complicated than the last.<sup>2</sup>

Julio Juristo, a master printer at Graphicstudio, led the process of recreating the packaging labels and stamps with screenprinted lacquer and ceramic decals.<sup>3</sup> For *Tampa Clay Piece 1* and *Tampa Clay Piece 4*, he replicated the smooth adhesive label by screenprinting the design onto decal paper finished with a clear coat. After the paper backing was removed, the label was transferred to the clay piece and fired a second time to firmly fuse them together. The decal images for *Tampa Clay Piece 2*, *Tampa Clay Piece 3*, and *Tampa Clay Piece 4* were screenprinted directly onto the clay using ceramic glaze.

The recreated labels indicated places of origin or destination, faded and torn from handling and travel. Printmakers created a patina effect for each clay piece by rubbing the sculpture with oils from their faces and soil from outside the studio, further accentuating the sculpture's worn appearance.<sup>4</sup>

1 See Gene Baro, *Graphicstudio U.S.F. An Experiment in Art and Education*, The Brooklyn Museum, exh. cat. (Philadelphia: The Falcon Press, 1978) 129-132.

2 See Ruth E. Fine and Mary Lee Corlett, *Graphicstudio: Contemporary Art from the Collaborative Workshop at the University of South Florida*, exh. cat. (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1991) 238.

3 Gene Baro, *Graphicstudio USF*, 129-132.

4 Fine and Corlett, *Graphicstudio*, 241.

## TAMPA CLAY PIECES



Robert Rauschenberg, *Made in Tampa Clay Pieces: Tampa Clay Piece 4*, 1972. clay with screenprinted decals and soil patina. 9-1/2 x 17 x 1-1/2 in. Published by Graphicstudio, University of South Florida Collection. Photo: Peter Foe.

By precisely replicating the details of these everyday materials, Rauschenberg did not simply construct an imitation of the cardboard box, but a history of the box's use.

In addition to cardboard, Rauschenberg fixated on the burlap bags that the clay was packaged in. Using the burlap bags with clay proved to be unsuccessful, so Alan Eaker suggested fiberglass, which would melt and fuse with the clay when fired. After sewing sheets of woven fiberglass into a bag of similar dimensions, it was dipped into clay slip, hung between two nails which were positioned at the artist's

instruction, and fired.<sup>5</sup> With the creation of *Tampa Clay Piece 5* and the other sculptures in this suite, Rauschenberg challenged traditional values of high art. By replicating commonplace items, he rejected the notion of art as autonomous from culture and society and encouraged more critical observation of overlooked aspects of everyday life.

—

Callan Donahoe  
MA Student  
USF School of Art & Art History



# AIRPORT SUITE

Hanna Weber

The *Airport Suite* was born out of Robert Rauschenberg's busy and collaborative summer of 1974. Upon the artist's return from Israel, he completed this Graphicstudio collaboration at his home in Captiva. The suite, named for their signing in a Tampa airport hotel to accommodate the artist's demanding schedule, consists of five prints—*Cat Paws*, *Sheephead*, *Room Service*, *Platter*, and *Switchboard*.

Rauschenberg was inspired by the vibrancy of blood after he cut his cheek while shaving; he and Saff had extensive discussions regarding Rauschenberg's desire to work with color. Despite Saff outfitting Rauschenberg's Captiva studio with an etching press and paper used for intaglio printing, the artist pursued his interest in printing on softer, more permeable materials, such as muslin, satin, and cheesecloth.

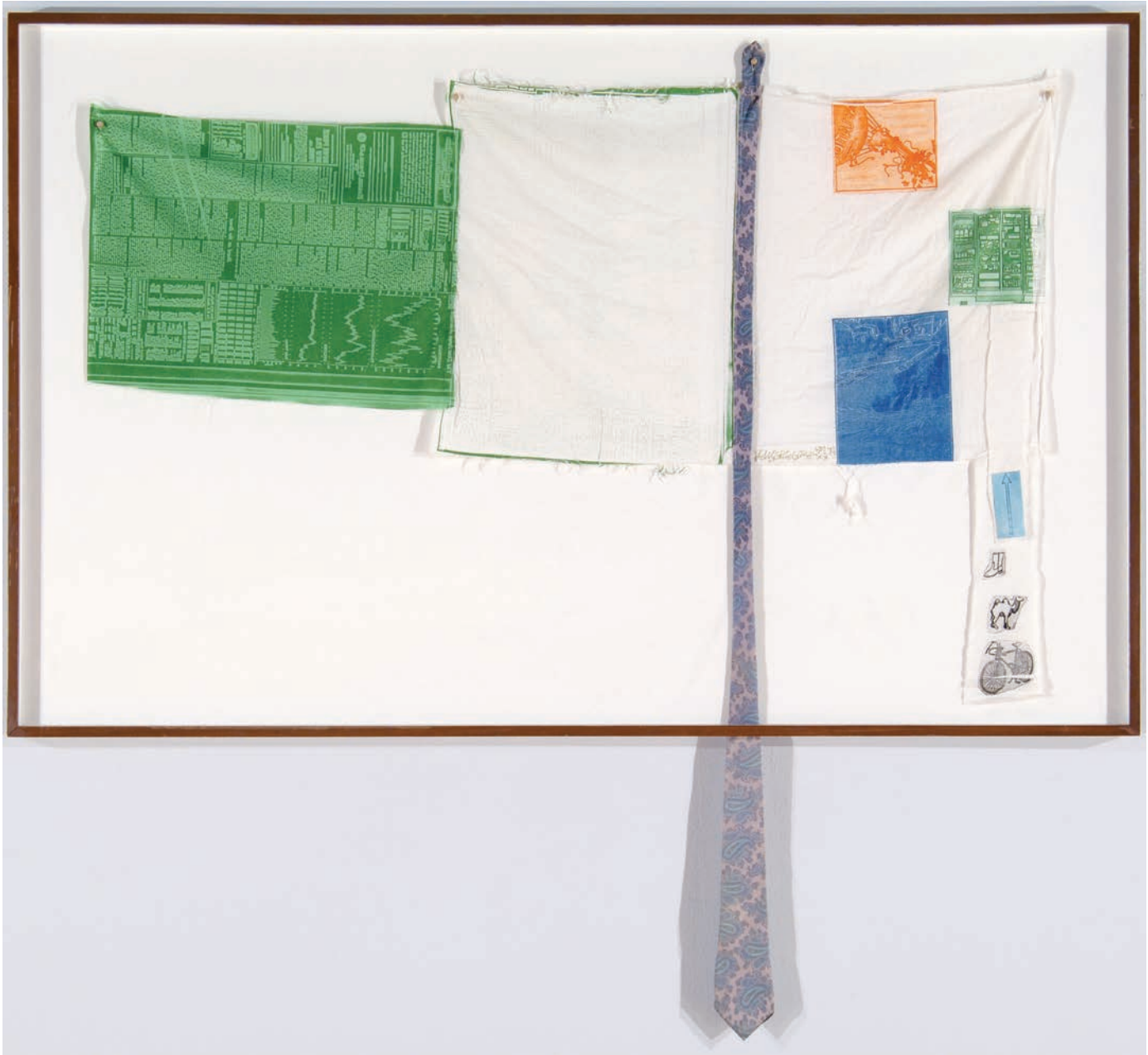
Throughout the *Airport Suite*, Rauschenberg constructed interactions between print and texture as he expanded the interplay of technique and medium. *Cat Paws* features a page from the *Wall Street Journal* printed in both intaglio and relief, creating layers of tonality. Frayed edges of cotton and muslin left impressions of threads caught between the plate while printing, and Rauschenberg embraced these as a collaboration between

himself, Graphicstudio printers Paul Clinton and Tom Kettner, the materials, and the press. Rauschenberg's comfort with chance and unpredictability was exemplified as the prints were laid to dry; *Cat Paws* was named after a cat walked across a drying print, leaving behind an impression of its paw.

Rauschenberg's use of the permeability of fabric allowed him to display the back of the material so that the newsprint could be read correctly, despite being printed inverso. In *Platter*, Rauschenberg constructed a dialogue between the printed cloth and advertising imagery, juxtaposing a grim *Wall Street Journal* headline, "Police Weapons Range from Electronic Cops to Glowing Bacteria," with a cheery, inverted Garden World ad announcing a "Citrus Tree Special \$6.99!" This deliberate contrast of headline and advertisement is a recurring theme throughout the series, as Rauschenberg intentionally referenced the multiplicities of the everyday experience.

Rauschenberg's innovative use of fabric as a printing media expanded the parameters of printmaking. Printers could make several prints in a single run, both on and through the material, while also manipulating opacity. Fabrics were stitched into collage, hung free, and displayed backward, all

## AIRPORT SUITE



Robert Rauschenberg, *Room Service*, from *Airport Suite*, 1974. relief and intaglio with collage. 54-1/2 x 57-3/4 in.  
Published by Graphicstudio, University of South Florida Collection. Photo: Peter Foe.

beyond the possibilities that printing on paper allowed. Found materials, such as Rauschenberg's own ties and Dr. Pepper bottlecaps, were then affixed to the collaged material and varied with each edition. In the *Airport Suite*, Rauschenberg's transgressive materiality expanded the

scope of printmaking and pushed the boundaries of what constituted an edition.

—

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Margaret Miller + Mark Fredricks

The underlying theme of *OFFSET: Robert Rauschenberg at Graphicstudio* is collaboration. Fittingly, the process of curating and organizing the exhibition was a team effort, and the staging of an exhibition of this magnitude would not be possible without the contributions of many people that we wish to acknowledge.

Dr. John Blakinger currently serves as Endowed Associate Professor of Contemporary Art and Director of Art History at the University of Arkansas. His research considers connections between art, science, and media technologies; globalization; protest and activism; and art historical theory and methodology. His 2019 lecture on the Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange (ROCI) at the Courtauld Institute of Art in London inspired our interest in working with him. We are grateful for his contribution to this workbook which considers the significance of the ROCI project.

Christian Viveros-Fauné, USFCAM Curator at Large, wrote about the legacy of Rauschenberg in 2017 for *The Village Voice*. We appreciate his essay in this volume which focuses on artists that have worked in residence at USF that represent an extension of Rauschenberg's legacy.

Two Art History graduate students from the USF School of Art & Art History spent the

last semester engaged in deep research on Rauschenberg's work at Graphicstudio to support this exhibition and publication. We thank Callan Donahoe and Hanna Weber for their excellent work and have included their writings on two of Rauschenberg's collaborations with Graphicstudio.

Special thanks are due to Gary Schmitt, Exhibition Designer, who enthusiastically approached the challenges involved in designing *OFFSET*. Each member of the CAM team contributes to our exhibitions, including Shannon Annis, Curator of the Collection and Exhibitions Manager; Eric Jonas, Corporate + Art Bank Coordinator and Chief Preparator; Madison Andrews and Alejandro Gómez, Preparators; Leslie Elsasser, Curator of Education; David Waterman, Chief of Security; Don Fuller, New Media Curator and Communication + Technology Manager; Randall West, Deputy Director of Operations; Amy Allison, Program Coordinator; Tamara Thomas, Events Coordinator; Kenzie Ferrell, Digital Media Specialist; Delaney Foy, Graduate Assistant; and students Bressia Borja, Anamary Encinales, Brooklynne Landry, Victoria Mercado-Lues, Arya Mhatre, Diego Nieves, and Mann Thukral.

We acknowledge a cohort of lenders for making this exhibition possible. Jade Dellinger, Director



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

of the Bob Rauschenberg Gallery at Florida Southwestern State College, has curated exhibitions, commissioned installations, and hosted lectures and performances that often connect with Rauschenberg, and we appreciate his open and collaborative spirit and thank him for loaning the print *Autobiography*.

Brenda Woodard, former executive assistant to Donald Saff and coordinator of critical aspects of the ROCI tour, loaned the full set of ROCI posters. Tom Pruitt, Studio Manager and Master Printer at Graphicstudio, loaned two key ROCI USA works from his personal collection. We thank collectors Daniel Edelman and Ivan Ontiveros who graciously loaned Narsiso Martinez's *Cara Cara*. Artist Tavares Strachan is acknowledged for loaning his three paintings directly from his studio.

We thank George Holzer for sharing his photography of some of Rauschenberg's projects, Ken Elliott for his assistance with installing *Eco-Echo VIII*, and the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation for sharing archival materials.

We acknowledge Chris Garvin, Dean of the USF College of The Arts, for his advocacy and support of the exhibitions and artists' residencies at the Contemporary Art Museum and Graphicstudio.

The generous sponsorships from members of our community were crucial to *OFFSET*. Major sponsors are the Vinik Family Foundation and Stanton Storer Embrace the Arts Foundation. Other sponsors include Judy Genshaft and Steve Greenbaum, the Casper Adams Foundation, Ami Utji and Jorn Veenstra, and Albert Alfonso. We also wish to acknowledge other funders including the

Florida Department of State, Florida Arts & Culture; the Lee and Victor Leavengood Endowment; and USFCAM ACE (Art for Community Engagement) Fund Patrons.

Donald Saff has been a valuable and generous collaborator to this project. He has loaned works from the collection of Ruth and Don Saff, hosted a two-day conversation in his studio in Oxford, Maryland with the curators and Dr. John Blakinger, and agreed to participate in a conversation for the opening of the exhibition. Thank you does not adequately acknowledge his profound legacy at the University of South Florida.

We wish to acknowledge the excellence of the legacy artists involved in this exhibition, including the late Trisha Brown, Rochelle Feinstein, Christian Marclay, Narsiso Martinez, Bosco Sodi, and Tavares Strachan.

Finally, this exhibition would not be possible without the creative genius that was and is Robert Rauschenberg.

—

Margaret Miller & Mark Fredricks  
Co-Curators

# EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

## ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG

### *Autobiography*, 1968

offset lithograph  
70 x 52 in. (each of three panels)  
Collection of Jade Dellinger

From *Airport Suite*, 1974:

#### *Cat Paws*

relief and intaglio on fabric with collage  
43-1/8 x 45-1/8 x 1-3/4 in.

#### *Platter*

relief and intaglio on fabric  
50-1/2 x 33-1/4 in.

#### *Room Service*

relief and intaglio with collage  
54-1/2 x 57-3/4 in.

#### *Sheephead*

relief and intaglio on fabric with collage  
35-1/2 x 51 in.

#### *Switchboard*

relief and intaglio on fabric with collage  
42-1/4 x 44-1/4 x 7-1/2 in.

Published by Graphicstudio, University of South Florida Collection

### *Araucan Mastaba/ROCI Chile*, 1986

screenprinted enamel with painted additions on polished natural aluminum over a plywood substructure, with sterling silver and lapis lazuli  
20-5/8 x 22 x 22 in  
Published by Graphicstudio, University of South Florida Collection

### *Bamhue/ROCI Japan*, 1987

square bamboo, neon lights, and brass electrical box, fittings, and cables  
90 x 4 x 10-3/4 in.  
Published by Graphicstudio, University of South Florida Collection

### *Chinese Summerhall*, 1983

chromogenic print  
30 x 1200 in.  
Published by Graphicstudio, University of South Florida Collection

From *Crops*, 1973:

#### *Mangrove*

#### *Watermelon*

screenprint and solvent transfer  
60-1/2 x 38-1/2 in.  
Published by Graphicstudio, University of South Florida Collection

### *Eco-Echo VIII*, 1992-93

acrylic and screenprinting ink on aluminum and Lexan, with sonar-activated motor  
88 x 73 x 26 in.  
Collection of Ruth and Don Saff

### *Fifth-Force/ROCI Italy*, 1986

cast bronze, silk and painted shot with pin  
83-1/4 x 15 x 45 in.  
Published by Graphicstudio, University of South Florida Collection

### *Light*, from *7 Characters*, 1982

unique paper and fabric collage  
41 x 26-1/2 x 2 in.  
Anonymous gift, Published by Gemini G.E.L., University of South Florida Collection

### *Made in Tampa Clay Pieces: Tampa Clay Piece 1*, 1972

clay with screenprinted lacquer decals and soil patina  
14-1/2 x 15-1/2 x 3/4 in.  
Published by Graphicstudio, University of South Florida Collection

## EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

***Made in Tampa Clay Pieces: Tampa Clay Piece 3,*** 1972-1973  
clay with screenprinted decal, fiberglass, epoxy, and soil patina  
19-1/2 x 24 x 5-1/2 in.  
Published by Graphicstudio, University of South Florida Collection

***Made in Tampa Clay Pieces: Tampa Clay Piece 4,*** 1972  
clay with screenprinted decals and soil patina  
9-1/2 x 17 x 1-1/2 in.  
Published by Graphicstudio, University of South Florida Collection

***Made in Tampa Clay Pieces: Tampa Clay Piece 5,*** 1972  
clay and fiberglass with collage  
40-1/4 x 22-1/4 x 4-1/2 in.  
Published by Graphicstudio, University of South Florida Collection

***Made in Tampa: Tampa 1,*** 1972  
two-color lithograph  
36 x 33 in.  
Published by Graphicstudio, University of South Florida Collection

***Made in Tampa: Tampa 2,*** 1972  
lithograph and blueprint  
30 x 73-1/2 in.  
Published by Graphicstudio, University of South Florida Collection

***Made in Tampa: Tampa 9,*** 1972  
lithograph and blueprint  
68 x 13 in.  
Published by Graphicstudio, University of South Florida Collection

***Made in Tampa: Tampa 10,*** 1972  
four-color lithograph  
34 x 118 in.  
Published by Graphicstudio, University of South Florida Collection

***Made in Tampa: Tampa 11,*** 1972  
blueprint and sepia photographic process  
29-1/4 x 41-1/4 in.  
Published by Graphicstudio, University of South Florida Collection

***Occur (Shales),*** 1994  
fire wax with transfer on canvas mounted on board with painted aluminum frame  
48 x 36 x 1-1/2 in.  
Collection of Ruth and Don Saff

***Pegasits/ROCI USA (Wax Fire Works),*** 1990  
acrylic, encaustic, hand painting and gilt silver leaf chair on stainless steel  
72-3/4 x 96-3/4 in.  
Collection of Marcia Brown and Tom Pruitt

ROCI Posters

***ROCI Berlin,*** 1990  
38 x 24-3/4 in.

***ROCI China,*** 1985  
34-3/8 x 24 in.

***ROCI Chile,*** 1985  
34-1/2 x 24 in.

***ROCI Cuba, Casa de las Américas (Silver),*** 1988  
35-1/2 x 23-3/4 in.

***ROCI Cuba, Castillo de la Fuerza (Gold),*** 1988  
35-1/2 x 23-3/4 in.

***ROCI Cuba, Museo Nacional (Bronze),*** 1988  
35-1/2 x 23-3/4 in.

***ROCI Japan,*** 1986  
34-1/2 x 24 in.

***ROCI Malaysia,*** 1990  
34-3/4 x 24-1/4 in.

***ROCI Mexico,*** 1985  
34-1/2 x 24 in.

***ROCI USA,*** 1990  
26-3/8 x 39-1/4 in.

***ROCI USSR,*** 1989  
38-1/2 x 25-1/2 in.

***ROCI Venezuela,*** 1985  
34-1/2 x 24 in.

offset lithographs  
Published by Universal Limited Art Editions  
Collection of Brenda Woodard

***Scatole Personali,*** 1951  
painted wooden box with lid, wooden beads, fabric, soil, stones and winged insect  
1-3/4 x 3-3/4 x 13-1/4 in.  
Gift of Donald Saff, Collection of Institute for Research in Art, University of South Florida



**Seminole Host/ROCI USA (Wax Fire Works)**, 1990  
 acrylic and encaustic on stainless steel  
 72-3/4 x 96-3/4 in.  
 Collection of Marcia Brown and Tom Pruitt

**Splayed (Shales)**, 1994  
 fire wax with transfer on canvas mounted on board  
 with painted aluminum frame  
 60 x 48 x 1-1/2 in.  
 Collection of Ruth and Don Saff

**Tibetan Garden Song/ROCI Tibet**, 1986  
 Chinese cello, chrome-plated washtub, glycerin,  
 Chinese scrollmaker's brush, mirrored Plexiglas  
 43 x 18-1/4 in. diameter  
 Published by Graphicstudio, University of South  
 Florida Collection

**ROCI Announcement Print**, 1984  
 25-3/4 x 23-1/8 in.  
 poster on rag paper  
 Published by Universal Limited Art Editions  
 Collection of Brenda Woodard

#### ADDITIONAL ARTISTS:

**Trisha Brown**  
**Untitled (Set One)**, 2006  
 softground etching with relief roll  
 25-1/2 x 22 in. (each of three)  
 Published by Graphicstudio, University of South  
 Florida Collection

**Rochelle Feinstein**  
**Research Park Project Ee**, 2014  
 handpainting and screenprint on canvas  
 80 x 71-1/2 in.  
 Published by Graphicstudio, University of South  
 Florida Collection

**Christian Marclay**  
**Allover (Rush, Barbra Streisand, Tina Turner, and  
 Others)**, 2008  
 cyanotype  
 51-1/2 x 100 in.  
 Published by Graphicstudio, University of South  
 Florida Collection

**Narsiso Martinez**  
**Cara Cara**, 2021  
 ink, charcoal, gouache, collage, and matte gel on  
 produce cardboard box  
 43 x 35 in.  
 The Edelman Ontiveros Family Collection

**Bosco Sodi**  
**Untitled** from **Sun Paintings**, 2021  
 oil paint on old dry chile sack  
 45-1/4 x 24-3/4 in.  
 Gift of the artist, University of South Florida  
 Collection

**Tavares Strachan**  
**Happy World**, 2022  
 oil, enamel, pigment, acrylic  
 47-1/2 in. diameter, 2 in. depth  
 Courtesy of the artist

**Galaxy Martian**, 2022  
 oil, enamel, and pigment, acrylic, mat board,  
 powder coated steel frame  
 16 in. diameter, 2 in. depth  
 Courtesy of the artist

**Galaxy Star City**, 2022  
 oil, enamel, and pigment, acrylic, mat board,  
 powder coated steel frame  
 16 in. diameter, 2 in. depth  
 Courtesy of the artist

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Back cover: Robert Rauschenberg in his Captiva island studio with the Graphicstudio editions *Araucan Mastaba/ROCI Chile* (1986) and *Bamhue/ROCI Japan* (1987) to his left and right. Photo: Nick Conroy © 1987.







  
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