



Ullens Center for
Contemporary Art
尤伦斯当代艺术中心

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Exhibition Venue:

Great Hall

Press material also available for
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Rauschenberg in China

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The Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (UCCA) is proud to present “Rauschenberg in China.” **On view in UCCA’s Great Hall from 12 June to 21 August 2016**, the exhibition centers on Robert Rauschenberg’s (1925–2008) magnum opus *The 1/4 Mile or 2 Furlong Piece* (1981–1998), its 190 parts stretching 305 meters and exhibited for the first time since 2000. Also included in the exhibition are a selection of Rauschenberg’s color photographs titled *Study for Chinese Summerhall*, taken during the artist’s travels in China in 1982. Accompanying these works is a collection of documentation and ephemera related to his **transformational 1985 exhibition “ROCI CHINA”** at the institution now known as the National Art Museum of China, offering a rare glimpse into the historical moment when the artist’s global quest for inspiration and cultural exchange through art put him in front of an emerging generation of Chinese artists, during a period that would later come to be known as the “85 New Wave.” Organized in collaboration with the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation and curated by Susan Davidson and David White, “Rauschenberg in China” is the first major exhibition in over three decades to showcase the artist’s work to Chinese audiences.

A masterwork often read as a self-contained retrospective, *The 1/4 Mile* was completed over a seventeen year period from 1981 to 1998 and reflects major themes from throughout Rauschenberg’s oeuvre, ranging from his White Paintings, Combines, “Cardboards”, and “Gluts” to collages composed with found images as well as the artist’s own documentary photographs. The earliest inspiration for the piece may have come from collectors Robert and Jane Meyerhoff, whose colt, which they had named Rauschenberg, won the Maryland Day purse in 1981. The furlong is a unit of measurement used in horse racing, and two furlongs the distance between Rauschenberg’s home and studio on Captiva Island, Florida, reiterating the artist’s constant theme of the connection between “art” and “life.” In quintessentially Rauschenbergian fashion, the components that make up *The 1/4 Mile* disregard traditional limitations of painting and sculpture. Patterned dress shirts, constructions made from found objects salvaged from junkyards, and silkscreens over Lexan move across walls and into the space as a single work, presented over a cacophony of street sounds collected from the artist’s travels. The first half of *The 1/4 Mile* inaugurated the Lila Acheson Wallace Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1987, staying on view for an entire year. The piece was later shown in its near-entirety as part of



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the artist's 1997 retrospective at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, subsequently traveling to the Museum of Fine Arts Houston and Guggenheim Bilbao in 1998. Rauschenberg continuously added and revised *The 1/4 Mile* during its extended period of creation, and in keeping with his ideology of non-intention, the work has been presented in various configurations over the years. Its most recent public showing prior to this exhibition opened at Mass MoCA, North Adams, Massachusetts, in 1999.

Alongside *The 1/4 Mile*, "Rauschenberg in China" also includes *Study for Chinese Summerhall*, two portfolios of images taken during Rauschenberg's first trip to China in the early summer of 1982, the only body of color photography the artist ever designated as art. Outfitted with a Hasselblad camera, Rauschenberg recorded scenes of daily life in early Reform-era China, captured through his sharp eye for composition and unique sensitivity toward beauty in the mundane, and relating to elements of urban environments and landscapes that had frequently appeared in photographs made throughout his career. These rarely seen images were made as studies for the monumental 30-meter scroll-like photograph *Chinese Summerhall*, one of the centerpieces of his 1985 "ROCI CHINA" exhibition in Beijing.

Commemorating Rauschenberg's interactions with China in the 1980s is a selection of ephemera and archival materials documenting his initial trip to one of the world's oldest paper mills in Jingxian, Anhui province, as well as his 1985 exhibitions in Beijing and Lhasa. Both exhibitions belonged to ROCI—the Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange—a serial project of international exhibitions, which were held between 1984 and 1991 in countries also including Mexico, Chile, Venezuela, Japan, Cuba, the Soviet Union, Germany, and Malaysia, culminating in a retrospective at the National Gallery in Washington, D.C. in 1991. The selection on view here includes hand-written statements, official documents, and brochures on the exhibition as well as a video travelogue documenting the 1982 trip. "ROCI CHINA" confounded and inspired viewers, whose exposure to Western art had been limited to reproductions within catalogues, and whose understanding of art had largely been confined to academic painting, sculpture, and printmaking. During its three-week run (15 November – 5 December 1985), the exhibition attracted more than 300,000 visitors. The idea for ROCI actually grew out of Rauschenberg's 1982 China trip. "The interaction that occurred in Jingxian, between old and new, East and West, parochial and international, gave to the ROCI project the impetus and energy, both artistic and practical, that



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would fuel it on a global scale. ROCI became, consequently, a mode of communication and a bridge between disparate cultures,” wrote ROCI artistic director Donald Saff.

“We are thrilled to revisit Rauschenberg’s unique position in China’s contemporary art history through a substantive presentation of a major work which was created at exactly the moment of this encounter,” notes UCCA Director Philip Tinari. “It is particularly exciting to be opening our exhibition in the same year as the Tate and MoMA retrospective, and thus to be participating in a worldwide reassessment of Rauschenberg’s multifaceted, global legacy. We hope that this exhibition will illustrate not only how Rauschenberg inspired China, but how China inspired him.”

About the Exhibition

The exhibition is accompanied by a slate of public programs including interviews with Chinese artists and thinkers about the artist’s impact on the Chinese art scene of the 1980s. The bilingual catalogue *Rauschenberg in China*, designed by Hubert & Fischer, includes a foreword by UCCA Director Philip Tinari and an introduction by exhibition curators Susan Davidson and David White in addition to focused essays by art historian Hiroko Ikegami, UCCA assistant curator Felicia Chen, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation curators Julia Blaut and Helen Hsu, and research assistant Jennifer Sarathy. It marks the first time that *The 1/4 Mile or 2 Furlong Piece* has been reproduced in full.

“Rauschenberg in China” has been made possible with the generous support of Tiffany & Co. The bilingual catalogue *Rauschenberg in China* and public programs for the exhibition are generously supported by Shanghai Artemis Art Center, founded by ANXIN TRUST Co., Ltd. Further major support for public programs is provided by King & Wood Mallesons Art Space, founded by Wang Junfeng and Handel Lee, with additional support from Frank F. Yang Art & Education Foundation. Additional support for educational programs is provided by James Qin and Lily Liu. Lighting technology support comes from Hongri Lighting. Green View Club provided support for framing. Promotional videos for the exhibition are co-produced by UCCA and Lead Film Media Partner Action Media. Audio guide is supported by VART. XiaoGe Entertainment and Gewara is the ticket marketing partner. Didi Private Cars is the exclusive transportation partner.

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About the Artist

Robert Rauschenberg (1925-2008) was born in Port Arthur, Texas. As a veteran of the U.S. Navy, he used the G.I. Bill to pursue an art education, enrolling at the Kansas City Art Institute, Missouri in 1947, and later at Black Mountain College in North Carolina, where he collaborated with artists including John Cage, Merce Cunningham, Cy Twombly, and Susan Weil. He moved to New York in 1949 and mounted his first solo exhibition at Betty Parsons Gallery in 1951. Immersion in the avant-garde experimentation of Black Mountain and the crucible of late Abstract Expressionist New York enabled Rauschenberg to develop a wildly inventive artistic practice. With his catholic interpretation, he created visual harmonies and cacophonies using found materials and objects, including disused household items, commercial products, construction refuse, and printed matter. In 1954, Rauschenberg began work on a series he called *Combines* (1954–64)—radically hybridized forms that pilfered from the vocabularies of both painting and sculpture while refusing to fit neatly into either category. The Jewish Museum in New York hosted his first retrospective in 1963. Combines exhibited with silkscreen paintings (1962–64) in the American presentation at the 1964 Venice Biennale earned Rauschenberg the International Grand Prize in Painting. As would be the case time and again with this controversial artist, his achievement generated as much acclaim as it did notoriety.

Throughout his career, Rauschenberg engaged variously with performance, photography, conceptual art, and technology, employing such diverse mediums as Plexiglas, cardboard, textiles, hand-made paper, and salvaged materials both organic and synthetic. In 1966 he cofounded Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.) to encourage creative dialogue between artists and engineers. By this time, Rauschenberg had also become an accomplished printmaker, bringing his iconoclastic, limit-pushing fervor to the cooperative atmosphere of the print studio. After moving from New York to Captiva Island off the Gulf coast of Florida, he established Untitled Press in spring 1971, which enabled him to invite his artist friends to make prints in Captiva. In 1976, the National Collection of Fine Arts, Washington, D.C. celebrated Rauschenberg as the country's bicentennial artist, with a retrospective exhibition that traveled to several museums throughout the country. A trip to China in the summer of 1982 galvanized plans for the Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange (ROCI, 1984–1991), a roving art making and exhibition enterprise that took him to ten countries outside the U.S. where he collected materials,

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took photographs, engaged with local artists and artisans, and presented his work. ROCl, an expression of the artist's belief in the power of artistic exchange to foster cross-cultural understanding, culminated in a summary exhibition at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. in 1991. In 1993, Rauschenberg received the National Medal of Arts from President Bill Clinton. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York launched a major career retrospective in 1997, which traveled internationally through 1999. Rauschenberg's first posthumous retrospective will open at the Tate Modern, London in 2016 before traveling to the Museum of Modern Art, New York and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Throughout his life Rauschenberg approached his art with a spirit of invention and a curiosity for new materials, technologies, and ideas.

About the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation

The Robert Rauschenberg Foundation fosters the legacy of the life, artistic practice, and activist philosophy of one of the most important artists of the 20th century. Through exhibitions, scholarship, grants, and a residency program, the Foundation furthers Rauschenberg's belief that art can change the world, while ensuring that his singular achievements and contributions continue to have global impact and resonance with contemporary artists.

About the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art

Founded in 2007, Ullens Center for Contemporary Art is the international institution at the heart of Beijing's 798 Art District, presenting a wide range of exhibitions and public programs each year. Sustained by the generosity of numerous individuals and entities—beginning with founders Guy and Myriam Ullens but now including a host of patrons and sponsors—it is a non-profit, non-collecting museum. In everything it does, UCCA aims to elaborate, through contemporary art and culture, an inclusive, cosmopolitan vision of China in the world.

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