ROCI East

Rauschenberg's Encounters in China

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In the long and celebrated career of Robert Rauschenberg (1925–2008), the Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange project has occupied an uneasy place. ROCI (pronounced "Rocky") took place from 1985 to 1991, when the artist created and exhibited works of art in 11 countries and regions to promote peace and understanding among diverse cultures. He deliberately chose what he called "sensitive areas" (i.e., areas that had little contact with American art and culture because of differences in their economic and political systems), and the whole international art project ultimately encompassed ROCI Mexico, ROCI Chile, ROCI Venezuela, ROCI China, ROCI Tibet, ROCI Japan, ROCI Cuba, ROCI USSR, ROCI Berlin, and ROCI Malaysia.[1] It concluded in 1991 with a large exhibition entitled *ROCI USA* at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, where no less than 171 works inspired by the hosting countries were on view (for the sake of clarity, titles of actual ROCI exhibitions are italicized in this chapter, whereas titles of projects are not).[2]

A project of this magnitude has never been undertaken by any other artist, and Rauschenberg even made a speech at the United Nations in December 1984 to announce it to ambassadors and diplomats. A couple of months before his speech, he wrote the "Tobago Statement" explaining its purpose:

> *Emphasis will be placed on sharing experiences with societies less familiar with non-political ideas or communicating "worldly" through art . . . I feel strong in my beliefs, based on my varied and widely traveled collaborations, that a one-to-one contact through art contains potent and 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.*[3]

Despite these lofty ideas, the venture was largely dismissed as unconvincing in artistic value and ethically questionable in concept when *ROCI USA* opened in Washington. While some reviewers praised his creation as "Rauschenberg Renaissance," most greeted it with skepticism, commenting on a "cultural arrogance" that lay behind the artist's optimistic promotion of world peace.[4] One even called him an "art imperialist," who behaves like a "big-time visiting American aided by ambassadors and surrounded by his entourage."[5] In the age of post-colonial theory, ROCI seemed to some critical eyes like a project of cultural invasion.

Before ROCI is dismissed as American cultural imperialism, however, it is important to examine with care the ways in which host countries received the project. This essay focuses on *ROCI China*, which took place at the National Art Museum of China in Beijing in 1985. The exhibition coincided with the country's "culture fever" with Western art and culture, and a number of contemporary artists recall the show as a bold and generous gesture, and a significant event that influenced their subsequent careers. Chinese artists and critics whom the author interviewed in the summer of 2009—including Xu Bing, Zhang Wei, Gao Minglu, and Li Xianting—stressed that the exhibition did a great favor to the emerging avant-garde art scene, which was in desperate need of information from the outside world after the Cultural Revolution. They emphasized the difficulty of organizing a Western contemporary art show in China at the time, and said that only Rauschenberg was willing to take up the challenge. In the local context, therefore, *ROCI China* functioned as a much-needed catalyst for Chinese artists to begin familiarizing themselves with the global art scene.

This poses an intriguing paradox: while Rauschenberg's home audiences faulted him for his cultural arrogance, audiences in China appreciated his real contribution to the beginnings of Chinese contemporary art. Another facet of this paradox is an assumption held by both American and Chinese artists that it was somehow necessary to have a contact with "Western" art in order to begin authentic contemporary art. To unravel this paradox, it is necessary to consider the issue of "cultural time lag," or cultural divide between the Western Bloc and the Eastern Bloc in the last stages of Cold War, which was a crucial factor that determined the reception of ROCI in host countries. In this sense, the phrase "East–West interchanges" had a double meaning for China, a country that belonged to the East both culturally and politically at the time. A discussion of *ROCI China* can lead to a reconsideration of not only American art but also the art of the Eastern Bloc in a global context, allowing us to assess ROCI's ambivalent legacy in a larger discourse of world art history.

ROCI's origin dates back to the 1964 world tour of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, which Rauschenberg joined as a costume and set designer.[6] Together with the company, he visited 30 cities in 14 countries, including India,

1. Robert Rauschenberg working on *7 Characters* series, Xuan Paper Mill, Jingxian, China, June 1982. Photo © 1982 Ruth Saff.

Thailand, Japan, and, behind the Iron Curtain, Czechoslovakia and Poland. During the tour, he produced not only sets and costumes for the dance company but also created his own works from local materials—including "Combines" that reassemble found materials. In Tokyo, for instance, he made a major Combine entitled *Gold Standard*, collecting junk objects from the streets and assembling them on a traditional gold folding screen. This engagement with a local culture set a pattern for Rauschenberg's future international enterprises. In addition, as he had the responsibility of "taking the most impoverished, impossible spaces and turning them into real theatrical events" as a stage manager, he considered the 1964 world trip a "good out-of-town rehearsal for ROCI."[7]

Conceived by Rauschenberg as a kind of peace mission to create global connections in art, however, ROCI was different in nature from his previous international engagements. In fact, the idea for ROCI took shape during his first visit to China in 1982 (Figure 1). Visiting the Xuan Paper Mill, the oldest paper mill in the world, in Jingxian, Anhui Province, he was shocked to see people deprived of the freedom to travel in their own country, completely disconnected from the outside world. According to Donald Saff, a print artist who accompanied him on the trip and later acted as ROCI's project manager, the Americans' freedom in China was quite limited as well. Despite the central government's permission, Rauschenberg and his crew had to stay at Yellow Mountains for a while, hindered by Jingxian officials who feared that the Americans might steal their secret of papermaking.[8] Even after they entered the village, they were not allowed to work inside the mill. Rauschenberg, therefore, had to give craftsmen

2. Robert Rauschenberg, *7 Characters: Individual*, 1982. Silk, ribbon, paper, paper-pulp relief, ink, and gold leaf on handmade Xuan paper, 43 × 31 in. From a suite of 70 variations published by Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles © Estate of Robert Rauschenberg/Licensed by VAGA, New York.

his designs and ideas so that they could work on them in the mill, show him what they did, and continue with the procedure until he completed a series of paper-based works entitled *7 Characters* (Figure 2).

In Beijing, Rauschenberg visited the Central Academy of Graphic Art and saw that the students were skilled but producing mediocre works because they were not allowed to create anything beyond the official style and subject. Feeling a responsibility to introduce them to the world, he and Saff gave a lecture on the history of Western modern art, and the students' enthusiastic responses convinced him of their need for communication with outside cultures. As Rauschenberg had already entertained an idea for an international traveling show, he decided to focus on countries that had little exposure to contemporary Western art (Japan and Mexico, two close allies of the United States, were exceptions). Constantly incorporating his responses to different cultures, Rauschenberg envisioned ROCI as an ever-evolving, accumulative project, in which people of diverse backgrounds could communicate with one another through his art.

While the project seems optimistic to a fault today, it satisfied a craving for Western art in China. With the end of Cultural Revolution in 1976, China had started receiving Western modern art by the mid-eighties. In 1981, works by Abstract Expressionist painters such as Jackson Pollock and Hans Hofmann in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, were shown for the first time in China. The MFA exhibition, accompanied by a Chinese-language catalogue that included an essay on American abstract painting, traveled from the National Art

Museum of China in Beijing to Shanghai Museum.[9] The "anti-spiritual pollution campaign" of 1983 put a hold on this trend for one year, however, and it was only at the end of 1984 that the Central Communist Party started a massive program to open up the country to Western arts and thoughts.[10] As a result, Chinese artists encountered modernism and postmodernism all at once, mainly through publications. It was at this crucial moment that *ROCI China* took place, meeting their desire to see works of contemporary Western art in person.

Still, Rauschenberg's project was inevitably burdened by a long and complicated process. Although he had approached the Chinese Ministry of Culture during his 1982 visit, he had to wait for the end of the "anti-spiritual pollution campaign" before starting a real negotiation. When the campaign began to wane in the summer of 1984, an American-based Chinese woman named Chun-Wuei Su Chien, who had acted as his coordinator and translator in 1982, returned to China and resumed the discussion with the Chinese Exhibition Agency. Her husband, Chih-Yung Chien, a physics professor at Johns Hopkins University, also did a considerable amount of advance negotiation with the government—including making a slide presentation of selected works by Rauschenberg with his wife's introductory text in Chinese—when he attended the thirty-fifth anniversary of the establishment of People's Republic of China as an honored guest in October 1984.

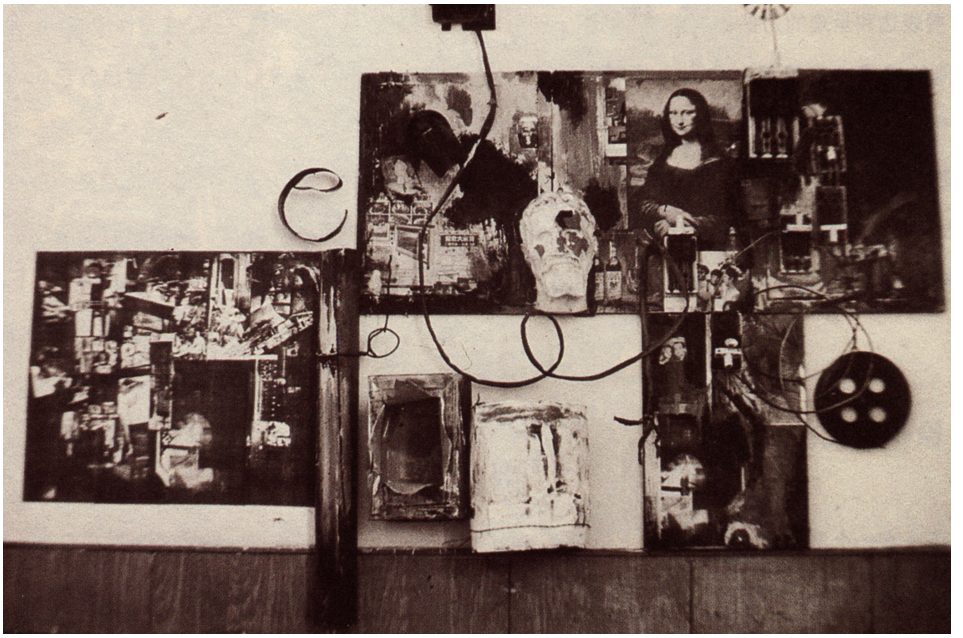
By that time, government officials recognized the merit of *ROCI China* in the context of increasing cultural exchange, but a solo show of a Western avant-garde artist, who was still alive and very active, was unprecedented and a potential political risk. Thus they demanded that Chun-Wuei Su Chien assume full responsibility for the selection of artworks and the catalogue production, and that all of the correspondence on the subject go through her.[11] Rauschenberg nominated her as a curator of *ROCI China*, and Chien traveled to Beijing again in November 1984 to reach an agreement with the Chinese Exhibition Agency about the budget, installation, and content of the exhibit.[12] The agency's requirements were stringent: it would check in advance all the works and video materials to be included in the show, and the Rauschenberg side would be responsible for all exhibition expenses, including the cost of a dance performance by the Trisha Brown Company that was planned in conjunction with the exhibition opening. Together with the National Art Museum's gallery rental fee of $26,000, the overall budget amounted to about $45,000.[13]

As the first Western contemporary art exhibition in the country, *ROCI China* unleashed a great shock in Beijing, attracting more than 300,000 visitors during its three-week run. First of all, the scale of the exhibition was unprecedented as it used four large exhibition halls on the first floor of the National Art Museum of China, occupying 2,250 square meters (about 7,380 square feet). Secondly, it was

3. Xu Bing at Robert Rauschenberg's *ROCI China* exhibition in Beijing, The National Art Museum of China, 1985. Photo courtesy Xu Bing Studio Inc.

presented in multiple media. While most of Rauschenberg's works involved the use of mixed media, the *Summerhall* series, which consisted of photographs taken by the artist in various parts of China, was installed as a 100-foot-long photo installation on the arched wall of the circular gallery. In addition, television monitors were scattered around the exhibition; one of them introduced Rauschenberg's life and work at the entrance, while others showed his activities in different ROCI host countries as well as American popular culture such as cartoons and musicals. Thirdly, the walls of the exhibition space were repainted. Since the National Art Museum had been built in 1962 as a showcase for idealized Chinese art and Communist propaganda, its walls had never been touched. But when Chien arrived in Beijing in July 1985, she brought over "rollers, trays, and 2,000 RMB [Renminbi, Chinese currency]" to have the dusty walls repainted fresh white before the installation began.[14] Rauschenberg's crew then added temporary walls and installed his freestanding and wall pieces in the space newly fashioned to Western standards.

Finally, the most shocking aspect of the show was Rauschenberg's extensive use of readymade and other contemporary art strategies that had never been seen in China before. While he used such everyday objects as umbrellas and even discarded cardboard in his creations in China, the *Kabal American Zephyr* series he had produced in the early 1980s also demonstrated his deployment of light and motion in his art. Moreover, photo transfer was visible on shiny metal plates in works from ROCI Chile, and *Japanese Clayworks*, which incorporated images of Mona Lisa and other famed paintings, demonstrated that even "art history" could be an artist's readymade material. Xu Bing (Figure 3), who saw the exhibition with his students as a young faculty member at the Central Academy of Fine Arts, recalls that it was hard to decide whether he liked Rauschenberg's work or



4. Wu Pingren, *History: Series of Conflicts*, 1985. Mixed media. From Gao Minglu, ed., *The '85 Movement: The Enlightenment of the Chinese Avant-Garde* (Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, 1988), 290.

not, because he had nothing to compare it with. Although he knew about Duchamp's readymade, he had not seen it in person. The only thing he knew that looked remotely similar to Rauschenberg's work was a farmer's house decorated with a variety of farming tools, which he had seen in the countryside where he was sent during the Cultural Revolution. The show nonetheless left a deep impression on him, because, combined with an exhibition of North Korean art held around the same year, it gave him an occasion to think about his art and future, convincing him that he needed to get out of his environment and stop producing work in the official Chinese art style.[15]

The diversity of Rauschenberg's contemporary art strategies offered a great inspiration for other young artists as well—artists who already were forming what would be called the '85 Movement all over the country.[16] Compared with Duchamp's conceptual readymade, Rauschenberg's prolific and indiscriminate use of found objects seemed more approachable as a point of reference. Most importantly, it vividly suggested an effective alternative to "socialist realism" and "traditional art," the two dead-end avenues of expression available in Chinese art at the time. For instance, in *7 Characters*, shown as part of *ROCI China*, Rauschenberg combined traditional paper with found images of contemporary Chinese life, not in an idealized realist style but as part of formal composition. As the critic Li Xianting suggests, this approach provided Chinese artists a non-ideological, or better, a critical way to deal with their reality in artistic practice.[17] According to him, even artists outside Beijing made a trip to the capital to see *ROCI China* and many artists both inside and outside academies started

5. Robert Rauschenberg visiting *Seven-Person Exhibition*, apartment of Marlowe Hood, November 1985. A large abstraction on the right is by Zhang Wei, and the one the left is by Wan Luyan. A sculpture on the table is by Gu Dexin. Photo courtesy Zhang Wei.

playing with readymade. For instance, Wu Pingren exhibited *History: Series of Conflicts* (Figure 4) in the Xuzhuo Contemporary Art exhibition in May 1986. Although it has yet to be confirmed whether he saw *ROCI China* or not, what we might call the "Rauschenberg effect" is clearly visible in this work, for the artist incorporated art-historical references such as Mona Lisa and a plaster cast into his mixed media painting.

Such a drastic artistic impact, however, combined with Rauschenberg's personal presence in Beijing, was bound to unsettle the Chinese art scene. In particular, his encounter with the local underground artists revealed an issue of "cultural time lag," a key term to understand the ambivalence of the ROCI project. This encounter took place at an underground exhibition specifically organized for Rauschenberg, held at the apartment of an American journalist, Marlowe Hood (Figure 5). A reporter for *South China Daily*, Hood was friendly with a group of underground artists who had no official art education at academies or elsewhere. They included such painters as Zhang Wei, Ma Kelu, and Zhu Jinshi, who had been engaged with impressionistic landscape under the banner of the No Name Group in the 1970s and moved on to abstraction in the 1980s. Thinking that it would be an interesting experience for them to meet Rauschenberg, Hood arranged a private show for the American artist.

Zhang Wei was a central figure in this underground art community in Beijing (Figure 6). Since the authorities still did not permit abstraction, he held a number of underground exhibitions in his apartment, creating a cultural scene of "Apartment Art." According to the art historian Gao Minglu, the space of an apartment was a kind of totality, as it was used not only as a living space but also as a studio, salon, and exhibition space, which

could function as social critique.[18] Engaging with abstraction meant constant negotiation with government censorship at the time. While single-story houses could easily be spied on, Zhang Wei lived in the corner room on the top floor of a five-story building, a location not conducive to constant surveillance. To further lessen the risk, he devised a special way of entry. In addition to a main entrance that was watched 24 hours a day, he asked his fellows to use two emergency stairs on both sides of the building. Thus the guests would come in at different times of a day from different entrances, knock on the door as arranged, and then enjoy the private show and party.[19] Even a decade after the end of Cultural Revolution, there was not much artistic freedom. In fact, when Zhang Wei and his fellow artists ventured to hold an exhibition in public in May 1985, it was banned before it opened. Since the situation was not much different half a year later, Hood suggested using his own apartment to show their work to Rauschenberg.

6. Zhang Wei standing in front of his abstract paintings, Beijing, 1982. Photo courtesy Li Shan.

With Hood's help, Zhang Wei organized *Seven-Person Exhibition*, including Gu Dexin, Wan Luyan, Qin Yufen, and Feng Guodong as well as the two painters mentioned earlier. Interested in the "unofficial" side of Chinese art, Rauschenberg paid a visit to Hood's apartment and looked at the artists' work attentively. Despite mutual interest, however, the evening took an unexpected turn. When Rauschenberg asked Zhang Wei if he had already seen the ROCI show, the Chinese artist emphatically answered, "Yes, almost every day." Rauschenberg responded that he wanted to take Zhang Wei to the United States so that he could tell everyone how the Chinese people loved his show in Beijing. Immediately disgusted, Zhang Wei started criticizing the American artist's work, saying that the more he saw it, the less impressed he was. A quarrel broke out between the two, and Chun-Wuei Su Chien refused to translate Zhang Wei beyond that point.[20] Ma Kelu and Zhu Jinshi took sides with Zhang, whereas Gu Dexin and Wan Luyan found the

dispute unproductive.[21] The truth be told, however, Zhang Wei did like Rauschenberg's work and all the other artists appreciated his interest in their show. Why, then, did this confrontation happen at all?

This is where the issue of cultural time lag is pertinent. In the mid-1980s, the engagement with abstraction was at once extremely radical and political in China. Most likely, however, their paintings instead reminded Rauschenberg of Abstract Expressionism, whose influence he had struggled to overcome 30 years ago. Certainly, this cultural time lag, or "belatedness," always exists between the putative centers of modernity and other peripheral regions to varying degrees. But in this case, the cultural distance was further complicated by the East–West division of the Cold War era. From the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 until the beginning of Deng Xiaoping's open-door policy in 1978, China was in a state of cultural isolation. In the meantime, the contemporary art scene of the so-called Free World saw numerous trends and transitions, which, on the whole, resulted in the commercialization of art. With the economic boom and the craze for Neo-Expressionist painting, indeed, oppositional avant-garde art was already history by the mid-1980s.

This cultural divide compounded communication difficulties between the American and the Chinese artists. Furthermore, there was a huge gap between their social standings. If Zhang Wei and others had to remain underground as long as they aspired to be avant-garde, Rauschenberg was highly visible, as an internationally celebrated artist as well as a self-appointed cultural ambassador. During his stay in China, he threw a large party for government officials, and *Time* magazine decided to commission from him a portrait of Deng Xiaoping, its 1985 "Man of the Year," for its cover, a project that Chun-Wuei Su Chien proudly announced at Hood's apartment. This did not please the young Chinese artists, who were obviously anti-government.

On the cover of 6 January 1986, issue of *Time* (Figure 7), Rauschenberg combined a few photographs of the Chinese leader with images of contemporary life in China, such as numerous bicycles in a factory and a construction site. In addition, a pair of scissors cutting a ribbon celebrates the new start for China. The artist told the magazine, "Today there is a new spirit, a new curiosity, that was missing three years ago. It is a great beginning."[22] Here the double character of Rauschenberg's combine technique is clearly visible; because it is basically a neutral method, it can be used both to criticize a political situation and to praise and affirm it, depending on the circumstances. This double character echoes the double-sided nature of the ROCI project. While he was critical of the political systems of the hosting countries, Rauschenberg willingly cooperated with their governments to realize his exhibitions. This duality no doubt made Chinese artists both appreciative and skeptical of his presence.

Still, their encounter with the American artist had a fundamental impact on their subsequent careers. Zhu Jinshi recalls that the idea of meeting with Rauschenberg inspired him to propose an exhibition of soundscape installation, something those underground Chinese artists had never experimented with before and that was thus rejected. At the same time the inspiration from Rauschenberg encouraged Gu Dexin—who was thinking of quitting his artistic career at the time—to continue making art.[23] After Rauschenberg's visit, four artists out of seven left China. In 1986 Zhang Wei moved to the United States and Ma Kelu went to Germany before later settling in New York. In the same year, Zhu Jinshi and Qin Yufen left for Germany and became installation artists. Feng Guodong, Gu Dexin, and Wan Luyan stayed in China, but the last two remain internationally active after working as the Tactile Sensation Group and the New Analysts Group with Chen Shaoping. Today all the artists except for Feng Guodong, who passed away in 2005, live and work in Beijing, which has become a flourishing contemporary art center.

7. Robert Rauschenberg, Portrait of Deng Xiaoping for *Time*'s "Man of the Year," cover, 6 January 1986 © Estate of Robert Rauschenberg/Licensed by VAGA, New York.

In lieu of a conclusion, I would like to return to a consideration of the ambiguous nature of ROCI's legacy. While its significance in American art history is considered small, ROCI became a milestone in Chinese art history, offering a much-needed catalyst for Chinese artists to think beyond their given cultural and political conditions. This case study of *ROCI China* also points to the need to connect and compare it with the reception of ROCI in other host countries in the Eastern Bloc. The significance of the larger Rauschenberg international project clearly lies in world art history and in the possibility of studying it as a link to understanding seemingly disparate developments. Just as *ROCI China* coincided with Deng Xiaoping's open-door policy in China, *ROCI USSR* coincided with Mikhail Gorbachev's perestroika in the Soviet Union, and *ROCI Berlin* with the fall of the Berlin Wall. In a nutshell, it coincided with the breakdown

of the cultural blockade between the East and the West. As if to prove this point, the dismantling of the Berlin Wall contributed to the speedy realization of the *ROCI Berlin* exhibition in 1990, and in the same year, following the success of *ROCI USSR* of 1989, Rauschenberg was even included in the USSR Pavilion at the Venice Biennale.[24]

Thus, one way to reconsider the ROCI project would be to use it as a vehicle to connect and compare various "non-conformist" and "dissident" art movements in the Eastern Bloc that have so far tended to be studied separately from one another.[25] If Rauschenberg's work and presence had a critical impact on the emerging Chinese avant-garde art scene, how did the dissident artists in East Germany and the Soviet Union respond to the ROCI exhibition, and how did the artists of the Eastern Bloc as a whole experience the breakdown of the cultural blockade? These questions ultimately go beyond the East–West division of the Cold War regime, as ROCI in Latin American countries such as Chile and Venezuela, where the cultural blockade existed for a different reason but with equal intensity, would unfold other contrasting stories.[26] The varying cultural time lag is an important topic for global art studies. By going beyond the nation-based framework of art history and by talking across cultures, we can begin to assess ROCI's legacy and revaluate it for a larger history of world art.

Notes

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1. Rauschenberg pronounced the name ROCI as "Rocky" to rhyme with the name of his pet turtle and used the turtle's image as an icon for the project. The full itinerary was as follows: *ROCI Mexico*, Museo Rufino Tamayo, Mexico City (17 April–23 June 1985); *ROCI Chile*, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago (17 July–18 August 1985); *ROCI Venezuela*, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Caracas (12 September–27 October 1985); *ROCI China*, National Art Museum of China, Beijing (15 November–5 December 1985); *ROCI Tibet*, Tibet Revolutionary Hall, Lhasa (2–23 December 1985); *ROCI Japan*, Setagaya Museum of Art, Tokyo (22 November–28 December 1986); *ROCI Cuba*, Museo Nacional, Casa de Las Américas, and Castillo de la Fuerza, Havana (10 February–3 April 1988); *ROCI USSR*, Tretyakov Gallery, Central House of Culture, Moscow (2 February–5 March 1989); *ROCI Berlin*, Neue Berliner Gallerie im Alten Museum, Berlin (10 March–1 April 1990); *ROCI Malaysia*, National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur (21 May–24 June 1990); and *ROCI USA*, Washington, DC (12 May–2 September 1991).

2. See Mary Yakush, ed., *ROCI: Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1991).

3. Robert Rauschenberg, "Tobago Statement," written in October 1984. See Yakush, *ROCI*, 154.

4. Lee Fleming, "Rauschenberg Redux: The World Tour Comes Home," *Museums & Arts Washington* (May–June 1991), 54. Hank Burchard, "Rauschenberg Sinks 'Overseas,'" *Washington Post*, 10 May 1991. For another negative review, see Eric Gibson, "Rauschenberg's Exhibit Has No Artistic Luster," *Washington Times*, 10 May 1991, E8.

5. Paul Richard, "Silk Sheets and Neon Bicycles: At the National Gallery, the Extravagant 'Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange,'" *Washington Post*, 12 May 1991, G1.

6. For the significances of Rauschenberg's international activities of the 1960s, see Hiroko Ikegami, *The Great Migrator: Robert Rauschenberg and the Global Rise of American Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010).

7. Robert Rauschenberg and Donald Saff, "A Conversation about Art and ROCI," in Yakush, *ROCI*, 162.

8. Donald Saff, telephone interview by author, 15 July 2009. As a print artist, Saff had been to China a number of times and was a director of Graphicstudio at the University of South Florida at the time. At Rauschenberg's request, he accompanied Rauschenberg's trip to China in 1982 and later acted as ROCI's project manager.

9. See Kenworth Moffett, "American Abstract Painting after 1945," in *American Paintings from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* (Beijing: National Art Museum of China, 1981), 30–33. This publication is in Chinese.

10. Fei Dawei, "The Twenty Years That Served as the Beginning: Chinese Contemporary Art of the Eighties and Nineties," in *Avant-Garde China: Twenty Years of Chinese Contemporary Art* (Osaka: National Museum of Art, 2008), 25. There was also a Picasso exhibition in Beijing in 1983.

11. Chun-Wuei Su Chien, "Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange in China (Beijing and Lhasa)," unpublished memoir of *ROCI China*, dated 26 March 1986, Robert Rauschenberg Archives, New York.

12. Rauschenberg's letter of commission, dated 25 October 1984, says: "I hereby appoint and authorize Mrs. Chun-Wuei Su Chien as the curator and the sole agent in charge of selecting and arrangements for the Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange exhibition in China." According to the budget drafted by Chien, she received $10,000 as a salary for 1984 and another $10,000 for 1985; Rauschenberg Archives.

13. "An Agreement between the China Exhibition Agency and the Evergreen Cultural Exchange for the Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange Exhibition in China," Rauschenberg Archives. Chien signed the agreement as a director of Evergreen Cultural Exchange, an organization she set up to do the ROCI work.

14. In a letter dated 22 July 1985, Chien wrote to Donald Saff and Terry van Brandt, "I brought over rollers, trays, and 2,000 RMB for CEA [Chinese Exhibition Agency], asking them to have the gallery painted *before* ROCI installation" [emphasis by Chien]; Rauschenberg Archives.

15. Xu Bing, interview by author, 27 July 2009, Central Academy of Fine Art, Beijing.

16. See Gao Minglu, ed., *The '85 Movement: The Enlightenment of Chinese Avant-Garde* (Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, 1988), and *The '85 Movement: An Anthology of Historical Sources* (Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2008). These publications are in Chinese.

17. Li Xianting, interview by author, 21 July 2009, Songzhuang.

18. Gao Minglu, "What is 'Apartment Art'?" *The Ecology of Post-Cultural Revolution Frontier Art: Apartment Art in China 1970s–1990s* (Beijing: Shuimu Contemporary Art Space, 2008), 10.

19. Zhang Wei, interview by author, 23 July 2009, Beijing.

20. Ibid.

21. There was a generation gap involved in the conflict as well, because the young Chinese artists felt they had to show their independence to Rauschenberg, who was the age of their fathers. While Zhu Jinshi recalls that Rauschenberg said "Relax" more than 10 times during his visit, the American artist advised Ma Kelu to unburden himself from the heavy tradition of Chinese art—a piece of well-meant advice that was nonetheless resented by the Chinese artists as patronizing. Ma Kelu and Zhu Jinshi, interviews by author, conducted respectively on 23 and 24 July 2009, Beijing.

22. Robert Rauschenberg, quoted in Richard B. Thomas, "A Letter from the Publisher," *Time* 127, no. 1 (6 January 1986): 4.

23. Gu Dexin and Zhu Jinshi, interviews by author, conducted respectively on 23 and 24 July 2009, Beijing.

24. See Joan Young and Susan Davidson, "Chronology," in *Robert Rauschenberg: A Retrospective,* ed. Walter Hopps (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1997), 582–83. For *ROCI USSR*, see Pamela Kachurin, "The ROCI Road to Peace: Robert Rauschenberg, Perestroika, and the End of the Cold War," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 4, no. 1 (Winter 2002): 27–43.

25. For dissident artists in the Soviet Union, see Renee Baigell and Matthew Baigell, eds., *Soviet Dissident Artists: Interviews after Perestroika*, (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995), and Norton Dodge and Alla Rosenfeld, eds., *From Gulag to Glasnost: Nonconformist Art from the Soviet Union* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1995). For the art of East Germany, see *Art of Two Germanys/Cold War Cultures* (New York: Abrams, 2009). This exhibition was organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and traveled to Nuremberg and Berlin.

26. For a detailed account of ROCI Chile, see Robert S. Mattison, *Robert Rauschenberg: Breaking Boundaries* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 220–59.