

Robert Rauschenberg Foundation

Hunter College MA in Art History

Untitled (*Japanese Recreational Claywork*), 1983

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fig. 1

Robert Rauschenberg, *Untitled (Japanese Recreational Claywork)*, 1983

Transfer on high-fired Japanese art ceramic, 33 $\frac{3}{4}$ \times 44 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches (85.7 \times 113 cm) [Degas insert: 12 $\frac{3}{8}$ \times 17 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches (31.5 \times 45.1 cm)]

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Robert Rauschenberg produced *Untitled (Japanese Recreational Claywork)* in 1983 (fig. 1) at the Otsuka Ohmi Ceramics Company (OOC) in Shigaraki, Japan. The work features reproductions of two well-known paintings from the nineteenth century, *Des glaneuses (Gleaners)*, 1857, by Jean-François Millet, and *Le foyer de la danse à l'Opéra de la rue Le Peletier (The Foyer of the Opera on the Rue Le Peletier)*, 1872, by Edgar Degas (figs. 2 and 3). Both images retain the approximate overall measurements of the originals. To create *Untitled*, color reproductions of the paintings were made into decals and fired onto durable Japanese art ceramic panels, a process that the OOC pioneered in 1980. Rauschenberg then added his own distinctive touches—a red line that runs horizontally across the lower quarter of the artwork and metallic paint around the edges of both image panels. His signature appears in his own hand at the base of the composition, while silver kanji characters provide a transliteration of his name vertically, along the upper right side.

Rauschenberg worked with employees of the OOC to make three prominent interventions to the reproductions of the Millet and Degas in *Untitled*. He changed the medium of the original paintings, inserted the Degas image into the Millet, and added his own unique markings. In his typical fashion, Rauschenberg challenged definitions of medium, originality, and authorship. The artist reappropriated appropriations (the photographic reproductions of masterpieces) to “recreate” them into one unified artwork—hence the title of the series: *Japanese Recreational Clayworks*. His choice of images and additions were anything but arbitrary. As I will argue,

fig. 2

Jean-François Millet, *Des glaneuses (Gleaners)*, also called *The Gleaners*, 1857. Oil on canvas, 32 $\frac{7}{8}$ × 43 $\frac{5}{16}$ inches (83.5 × 110 cm). Musée d'Orsay, Paris.



fig. 3

Edgar Degas, *Le foyer de la danse à l'Opéra de la rue Le Peletier (The Foyer of the Opera on the Rue Le Peletier)*, 1872. Oil on canvas, 12 $\frac{5}{8}$ × 18 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches (32 × 46 cm). Musée d'Orsay, Paris; Count Isaac de Camondo bequest, 1911.



HOW TO CITE THIS ESSAY

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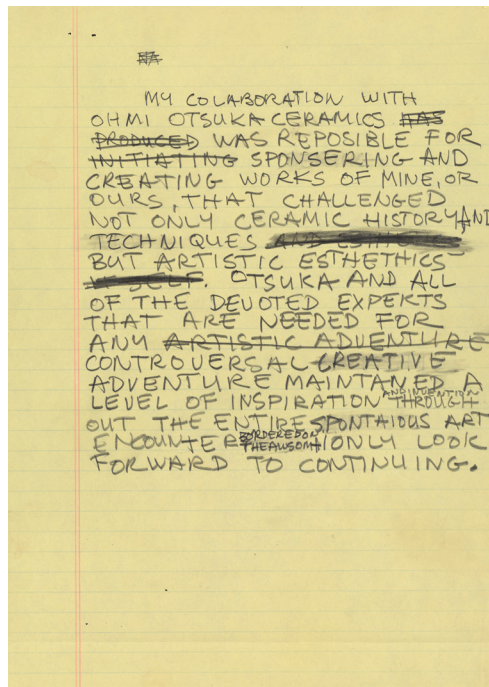


fig. 4

Robert Rauschenberg's handwritten draft of a statement about his collaboration with Ohmi Otsuka Ceramics (OOC), Shigaraki, Japan, May 10, 1983. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.

Rauschenberg's ingenious red line deliberately established a connection between Degas's and Millet's compositions through the relationship of the figures to dance, effectively choreographing *Untitled* into an art historical pas de deux.

By 1983, Rauschenberg had already been traveling the world. Having just finished a project with the Xuan Paper Mill in China, he then visited Japan. This was his second trip to the country, as he had toured there with the Merce Cunningham Dance Company in 1964. The OOC specifically invited Rauschenberg to come to Shigaraki to experiment with, and draw attention to, their new technology. In 1980, the OOC had begun to fabricate "impossibly" flat, thin, and smooth ceramic panels for use as walls, tabletops, or "art ceramics."¹ These panels were exceptionally large and could be fired without

warping or shrinking; they were therefore ideal as supports for reproducing imagery. The ability to manufacture at a maximum scale of nearly 9 × 30 meters eliminated the need for many small tiles conjoined and sealed by grout, thus providing an uninterrupted surface image.² Today, these art ceramics go by the name of "toban" or "toban masterpieces." They decorate bullet train stations in Japan, the Newark and JFK airports, and, in 1998, the company opened the Otsuka Museum of Art in Naruto, Japan, where some one thousand toban masterpieces are on display (including full-scale recreations of the Sistine Chapel and Scrovegni Chapel, among many other examples).³

The *Japanese Recreational Claywork* series lacks serious scholarly attention, and few works have been analyzed in detail. Instead, the collaboration with the OOC is often positioned—to its detriment—as a mere prelude to the larger Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange (ROCI) project (1984–91). Clearly disparate in medium, source imagery, and intention from the *ROCI JAPAN* paintings (1984/1987), the *Japanese Recreational Clayworks* derived from a noteworthy creative and technical collaboration in clay. In a note dated May 10, 1983 (fig. 4), the artist wrote positively about the collaboration and emphasized the "unique" and "controversial" nature of the series:

My collaboration with Ohmi Otsuka Ceramics was responsible for sponsoring and producing works of mine or ours that uniquely challenged not only ceramic history and techniques, but artistic aesthetics. Otsuka and all of the devoted experts who are needed for any controversial creative adventure, maintained a spiritual and physical level of inspiration and invention throughout the entire spontaneous cultural encounter that bordered on the awesome. I look forward to continuing our work.⁴

fig. 5

Robert Rauschenberg working on *Drawing Room 4* (*Japanese Recreational Claywork*), 1983 at Otsuka Ohmi Ceramics Company, 1982. Photo: Attributed to Robert Rauschenberg Studio staff. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.



Rauschenberg produced two bodies of work with the OOC: the *Japanese Clayworks* (1982–83/1985) and the *Japanese Recreational Clayworks* (1982–83/1985/1989). The former are pieces reminiscent of Rauschenberg's Combines (1954–64); they feature imagery and markings on toban transfer panels and include three-dimensional sculptural components. The *Japanese Recreational Clayworks*, on the other hand, consist only of the flat, wall-mounted

ceramic toban panels with transferred imagery and glazes. Rauschenberg was inspired to make the so-called “recreational” works when he saw the various reproductions of masterpieces in process around the facility while waiting for the first set of *Japanese Clayworks* to be fired (fig. 5). Of the some forty-five works in *Japanese Recreational Clayworks*, the most widely exhibited are *Pneumonia Lisa* (*Japanese Recreational Claywork*), 1982, and *Able Was I Ere I Saw Elba II* (*Japanese Recreational Claywork*), 1985, undoubtedly because they feature iconic images, including Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, ca. 1503–19 and Jacques-Louis David's *Napoleon Crossing the Alps*, 1801, respectively.

Although *Untitled* also contains two venerable masterpieces from the history of Western art, it is unique within the series as it is the only work in which the artist did not utilize his typical method of overlapping imagery, and the only example that contains one image cleanly inserted into another.⁵ Moreover, the *Japanese Recreational Clayworks* typically combine historic works by other artists with Rauschenberg's own photographs of contemporary Japan: *Untitled* does not. For the Millet and Degas transfers, the artist either used two entirely different panels, or one that he subsequently cut and recombined. He then “framed” each picture in its entirety by gilding their respective exterior edges with metallic bronze and gold-colored paints (fig. 6).⁶ In *Untitled*, Rauschenberg intended the Degas and Millet to relate to one another in a way unlike any of the other assembled images in the series.

As noted above, to manufacture the *Japanese Recreational Clayworks*, Rauschenberg and his collaborators at the OOC transferred decals with reproductions of paintings and the artist's photographs onto ceramic panels. First came the selection of in-house images. As representatives from the OOC recount, “Rauschenberg freely walked around our office and production

fig. 6

Untitled (*Japanese Recreational Claywork*), detail, 1983. Image taken by the author during a meeting with conservators at the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.



areas then. He would randomly pick artwork of interest. There wasn't a catalogue to choose [from,] but he combined artworks of his liking to 're-created' [*sic*] a new ceramic art."⁷ The chosen images were then silkscreened onto a silicone release paper that the artist arranged face up on the ceramic panels. The OCC team soaked the individual release papers with water to remove the printed image from the paper, thus transferring the design to the clay panel.

To fire the ceramic panels, the OCC used a special horizontally oriented kiln that stretched about 30 meters.⁸ Typically, panels in the *Japanese Recreational Claywork* series were fired multiple times to correct colors and achieve the characteristic layering of images; this was possible because the panels did not shrink, bend, or change when subjected to high temperatures. Given that he was physically present at the OCC in 1983, Rauschenberg could have added his painted elements after the images were fired. Correspondence regarding a damaged work from the series, however, indicates that it was also possible that the artist marked the decal images themselves with glaze pigments and then gave them to the company for transfer and firing.⁹

No production record exists at the OCC for Untitled, but conservator Christine Fronhert surmises that it was likely made as follows: once the images were transferred, Rauschenberg painted the red line and the silver characters (the latter element added with a stamp, as the silver pigment has no brushstrokes; fig. 7). The piece was fired, likely followed by a surface coating of some type of finishing glaze. Subsequently, the artist painted the signature on the lower right by hand, and finally he added the gold and bronze paint around the perimeters of the panels (gold around the exterior edge of Untitled and bronze around the interior edges where the Degas panel meets the Millet).¹⁰ Rauschenberg likely used masking tape to create a sharp edge on the top and bottom of the red line, and rendered it with a paintbrush dipped in colored glaze. As the metallic paint covers the external edges of both panels, Rauschenberg must have added it before the smaller piece was inserted into and attached to the larger one. To secure the separated panels and provide a wall mount for Untitled, a sturdy metal frame was screwed into a layer of fiberglass under a layer of resin on the back of the ceramic panels.

In Rauschenberg's Combines and silkscreen paintings from the 1950s and 1960s, he had already incorporated historical masterpieces from Western art as both source imagery and physical collage elements. The artist himself has said that his encounter with Thomas Gainsborough's

The Blue Boy, 1770, at the Huntington Art Gallery in San Marino, California, led him to become an artist.¹¹ Rauschenberg's seemingly positive relationship with art history suggests that he used reproductions of the old masters not as a critique, but as a form of respect or reverence.¹² The art historian Maria Lydia Brendel has asserted, instead, that through parody and manipulation, Rauschenberg did not seek to pay homage to the appropriated works of art, but rather to refer to the

fig. 7

A worker at the Otsuka Ohmi Ceramics Company stamping Rauschenberg's signature in kanji characters, 1982. Photo: Attributed to Robert Rauschenberg Studio staff. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.



act of representation itself.¹³ In *Untitled*, Rauschenberg juxtaposed reproductions of the Millet and the Degas—twice removed from the originals—likewise forcing the viewer to consider the relationship between representation and appropriation, creation and recreation.

Indeed, the visual evidence suggests that Rauschenberg brought the Millet and the Degas together by choice, not by chance. Both are famous works in the collection of the Musée d'Orsay, Paris. In *Gleaners*, Millet, a French realist painter, prominently features three women in the foreground amid a light-green field, hazy yellow haystacks, and a gray-blue sky. When first exhibited at the Paris Salon of 1857, critics and the public panned the painting for its focus on women engaged in the backbreaking work of gleaning, or gathering the remains of the harvest, a task usually reserved—out of charity—for the poor and indigent. Millet's dignified treatment of the women, however, unabashedly extolled the peasant class and their toiling of the land as the heart of French national identity. In *Gleaners*, the women's heavy layers of earth-toned red, blue, and green clothing, their outstretched arms, and their curved spines stress their dedication to the task and the physicality of labor in the fields.¹⁴ The Musée d'Orsay emphasizes the rhythmic motion of their work, writing on its website that "[Millet] juxtaposes the three phases of the back-breaking repetitive movement imposed by this thankless task: bending over, picking up ... and straightening up again."¹⁵

At first glance, Millet's burdened women and rural setting could not be more different from the lithe ballerinas depicted by the realist and Impressionist painter Edgar Degas. *The Foyer of the Opera on the Rue Le Peletier* captures several groups of dancers in white tutus gathered in a spacious room with high ceilings, pale yellow walls, and ornate molding. A red barre starts at the left wall and continues across the back wall of the room. One dancer stretches on the barre, but otherwise, in the larger context of the composition, the red line seems to cut across the scene in a visually arbitrary way. An arched niche or actual doorway divides the back wall, confounding the reading of the interior space. Is there an additional area beyond with more dancers, or does a mirror span the archway reflecting ballerinas in the same large room? A young girl with a black bow on her waist stands apart from the rest at the far left, and two men at far right seem to be instructing her, which leaves a curiously unoccupied space in the center of the composition. Degas punctuated the empty floor by placing a vacant chair in the center foreground at the threshold of the pictorial space.



fig. 8

Robert Rauschenberg with *Untitled (Japanese Recreational Claywork)* (1983) at Otsuka Ohmi Ceramics Company, 1982. Photo: Attributed to Robert Rauschenberg Studio staff. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.

As noted earlier, the size of both reproductions conforms to the originals, the Degas being 60 percent smaller than the Millet. Rauschenberg inserted the former in such a way that it shares its top edge with the latter, while not interfering with the forms of the three women gleaners below (fig. 8). Therefore, the Degas obliterates the background details of the Millet, focusing the viewer's

eye even more directly upon the women and their sequential gestures. In juxtaposing the two quite disparate types of female figures, Rauschenberg creates a visual dialogue between the bodies of the ballerinas and the gleaners, infusing the latter with the sense of energy and grace. Rauschenberg solidifies this dialogue through the addition of the red line, placed so precisely that, in *Untitled*, the central gleaner appears to be grasping a solid rod—or barre. In fact, a vertical line can be drawn from the foot of Degas's figure stretching her leg on the ballet barre to the hand of the central gleaner clasped around Rauschenberg's barre. Herein the addition of the red line through the bottom quarter of the Millet suddenly makes sense: it echoes the red barre in the Degas above. Rauschenberg enlivens our perceptions. The coordinated movements of the peasants become a form of dance, while the rigorous training of the ballerinas becomes a form of labor.

One is reminded of Degas's often-cited remark to his dealer Ambroise Vollard, "They call me the painter of dancers. They don't understand that for me the dancer was just a pretext for ... rendering movement."¹⁶ The themes of dance, the movement of bodies in space, and the rhythm involved in the most banal of activities, all relate to longstanding concerns in Rauschenberg's oeuvre. He began choreographing his own dances and performances while touring with the Merce Cunningham Dance Company. Through that network, he became an active participant in the Judson Dance Theater—a company known for transformations of everyday movements into dance. Curator Nancy Spector writes:

The Judson Dance Theater [was] an open collective whose primary objective was to liberate choreography from all formal, conceptual, and theatrical conventions ... the dancers associated with Judson created a nonhierarchical theater that privileged pure, unmediated movement, the raw physicality of the body in action, and the emancipatory potential of sheer corporeality.¹⁷

Through Rauschenberg's experience with his contemporaries, his definition of what qualified as "dance" was more fluid than traditionally perceived ideas. In *Untitled*, the artist did not present any moments of polished performance. Instead, he focused on dancers in rehearsal, stretching and preparing to dance rather than engaging in unified movement, and gleaners in a field moving to an underlying rhythm of self-preservation and survival.

In combining the two compositions, another kind of "dance" emerges in the two-dimensional *Untitled*. Spector argues that Rauschenberg's entire oeuvre is performative and collaborative at its core, including his visual art production, both because of the frequent incorporation of dance imagery and because of the viewers' interactions with the works themselves.¹⁸ (For example, members of the public must move around and/or manipulate Rauschenberg's *Combines* to explore and fully see them.) The repetition and mirroring of the red barre in *Untitled* forces the eye to bounce up and down and back and forth between the two compositions, and to follow the intricate relationships of the bodies to one another and to the spaces in which they move. Reflexively, the viewers become more aware of their own bodies and the surrounding environment.

The addition of the red barre to the Millet foregrounds the subject of dance and draws out a previously unseen relationship between the Millet and the Degas works. Yet, it is also one of

fig. 9

Untitled (*Japanese Recreational Claywork*), detail, 1983. Image taken by the author during a meeting with conservators at the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, New York.

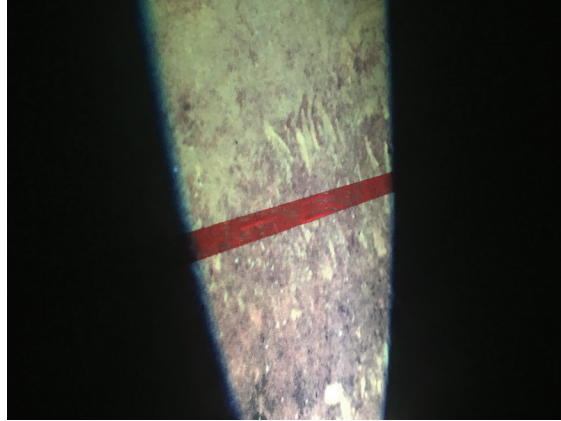


fig. 10

Untitled (*Japanese Recreational Claywork*), detail, 1983. Image taken by the author during a meeting with conservators at the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, New York.



several interventions that establish Rauschenberg's authorship. Through material transformations and the double (English and Japanese) signatures in *Untitled*, Rauschenberg shows that he has not just reproduced, but recombined and recreated past imagery in collaboration with the OOC and the earlier artists.

Rauschenberg simultaneously affirms and denies definitions of originality. To begin with, the surface of *Untitled* is entirely smooth, which causes a conceptual and visual contradiction: the "idea" of painting without any painterly medium. While the visual texture of Degas's dancers' white tulle skirts, and Millet's muted green, yellow, and brown grasses are preserved in the transfer, the physical depth is the same as that of the other visual elements, including several thin scratches and white bubbles captured below the surface glaze.¹⁹ Rauschenberg removes the labor, the hand of Millet and Degas. Only the flat source image is "original," reduced to a disembodied reproduction.²⁰ Actual, painterly brushstrokes are only visible in the rendition of the red line and, significantly, they are from Rauschenberg's hand, reinforcing his status as the creative "artist" (fig. 9).²¹

Rauschenberg's prominent signatures also represent—and indexically mark—his singular imprint. On the bottom right, the artist rendered his surname with a painted glaze that is raised above the flat surface of *Untitled*. Typical of his signature, the letters are all capitals. Though the muted color blends in slightly with the colors of Millet's field, the relief texture calls attention to its presence (fig. 10). The letters feature a trace of green pigment, a noteworthy fact, given that this pigment does not appear anywhere else in the composition. On the top right, the five kanji, a form of Japanese writing that uses Chinese characters, sound out "RA-U-SCHI-EN-BAGU."²² Here, the signature is completely smooth, rendered in a light-silver pigment that harmonizes with the sky, while remaining distinctly visible. In several pieces from the *Japanese Recreational Clayworks* series, Rauschenberg used the same kanji as a kind of signature to accompany his own autograph. By including both languages, he ensured there was no doubt as to authorship, while also paying due respect to the Japanese culture in which he made them.

Indeed, Rauschenberg's play with authorship and reproduction reflects the relationship between originality and tradition in Japanese culture. In *The Great Migrator*, Hiroko Ikegami discusses Japanese artist Shinohara Ushio's *Coca-Cola Plan*, 1963, as a riff in title and imagery on

Rauschenberg's own 1958 *Coca-Cola Plan*. She asserts that, like many contemporary Japanese artists, Shinohara struggled to be original, given the weight of his traditional art education and the lasting impact of foreign influences on Japanese art.²³ Instead, Shinohara chose to build on Rauschenberg's innovation. Ikegami writes, "Ironically, 'Imitation Art' proved that the 'avant-garde road' in Japan might actually lie in *imitation* rather than *originality*, and thereby radically debunked the concept of originality as a sustaining myth for the avant-garde."²⁴ In 1964, Rauschenberg visited Shinohara's studio. During the visit, Shinohara asked if he could imitate the American artist's work and Rauschenberg replied, "sure."²⁵ As an artist, Rauschenberg was determined to establish his originality, but, as was the case with *Coca-Cola Plan*, he was not against one of his own works having an afterlife through appropriation.

It comes as little surprise that Rauschenberg would support Shinohara's imitation, as he himself constantly participated in the sharing and borrowing of images and artworks across platforms and cultures. Nearly twenty years after his visit to Shinohara's studio, Rauschenberg continued to pursue appropriation as a form of collaboration with other artists. By reproducing Degas's and Millet's paintings in *Untitled*, he ushered the works into an avant-garde afterlife—albeit one contextualized through his own artistic interventions. Through transforming the medium, combining imagery from the two paintings, and his painted and glazed additions, Rauschenberg cemented the relationship between *Gleaners* and *The Foyer of the Opera on the Rue Le Peletier*. As such, the innovative juxtaposition of seemingly unrelated works within *Untitled* produces a reflection on the relationship between labor and dance. Then, in establishing his own hand as the predominant artistic marker and signing the piece in both English and Japanese, Rauschenberg ensured that his international audience would recognize *Untitled* as his own. This complex and unique artwork exemplifies the constant tension between appropriation and authorship entwined within Rauschenberg's oeuvre, demonstrating that, to his mind, no image or icon was immutable.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Today, the company focuses predominantly on these "art ceramics" or "toban," including offering people the opportunity to transfer portraits onto the panels. Other products include terracotta formed from ceramic molding methods (used for wall textures), posters (again made on "toban"), and memorabilia (including decorative dishes).
- 2 Yoshiaki Inui, "Rauschenberg and Shigaraki," in *Robert Rauschenberg: Shigaraki* (Osaka: Otsuka Ohmi Ceramics Company, 1986).
- 3 "The Making of Toban Masterpieces," Otsuka Ohmi Ceramics Co., Ltd., accessed December 11, 2018.
- 4 Robert Rauschenberg, "My collaboration with Ohmi Otsuka [*sic*] Ceramics...", 1983, Robert Rauschenberg papers, RRFA 01, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York. Japanese reviews, in turn, characterized Rauschenberg as an innovative outside presence. See "Master of Pop: Rauschenberg repays debt to Japan," *The Japan Times Weekly* 29, no. 48, November 29, 1986, pp. 1, 8–9.

- 5 While Rauschenberg often used several panels to create works in this series, *Untitled* is the only work that comprises panels of different dimensions and does not feature imagery stretching across the breaks between panels.
- 6 Whether the metallic paint continues a framing method he used commonly in the 1980s (in Sri Lanka he produced solvent works on signature mats with an existing gold frame and in the *7 Characters* series he added gold leaf "frames" to handmade Xuan paper), or serves as a practical choice (he is adding a frame-like finish to a piece weighing nearly 55 kilograms), this detail completes the piece. Covering both the edges of the Millet and the top border of the Degas, it unifies the ensemble into a whole. While this may be read as the final sign that these two pieces cannot be separated, Rauschenberg complicates this notion by adding metallic bronze paint to the nearly invisible interior edges of the Degas, giving the ceramic piece upon which *The Foyer of the Opera on the Rue Le Peletier* is reproduced its own internal frame. Therefore, it is worth noting that the artist elevates each individual ceramic to a finished state despite his many artistic choices that emphasize their possible interrelation.
- 7 Sachiko Okamoto, e-mail correspondence, November 20, 2018.
- 8 Terry van Brunt, e-mail correspondence with David White, September 19, 2018.
- 9 Correspondence with Otsuka Chemical Company, 1986–1991. Japanese Clayworks. Curatorial Files. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.
- 10 Meeting with conservator Christine Fronhert at the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, New York on September 29, 2018.
- 11 "Chronology," Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, accessed November 11, 2018.
- 12 The author in conversation with David White (October 11, 2018, at Robert Rauschenberg Foundation) and art historian and previous curatorial advisor to Rauschenberg, Susan Davidson (October 30, 2018 at Hunter College), both expressed this same opinion.
- 13 Maria Lydia Brendel, "Reconnecting with Rubens—Neo-Allegorists: Robert Rauschenberg, Peter Dressler, Jean-Luc Godard," in *Allegorical Truth-Telling via the Feminine Baroque: Rubens' Material Reality, Reframing Het Pelsken* (PhD diss. McGill University, Montreal, 1999), pp. 112–40.
- 14 The coloring of *Gleaners* in Rauschenberg's ceramic reproduction is slightly browner and more muted than Millet's original painting. In the original *Gleaners*, many have interpreted the red and blue colors of the women's caps, along with the middle woman's white vest, as a reference to the tricolored flag of France; however, in Rauschenberg's presentation, the coloring instead emphasizes the brown of the earth and the dark heaviness of their physical labor.
- 15 "Jean-François Millet *Gleaners*," Musée d'Orsay, accessed January 7, 2019. The English text suggests the women are gathering corn; however, this is a translation error. In the painting, the women gather wheat.
- 16 Richard Kendall and Jill DeVonyar, *Degas and the Ballet: Picturing Movement*, exh. cat. (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2011), p. 15.
- 17 Nancy Spector, "Rauschenberg and Performance, 1963–67: A 'Poetry of Infinite Possibilities,'" in *Robert Rauschenberg: A Retrospective*, ed. Susan Davidson and Walter Hopps, exh. cat. (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1997), p. 233.
- 18 Spector, "Rauschenberg and Performance, 1963–67," p. 226–46.
- 19 There are several scratches: one in the sky on the left of the piece, one across the center figure's skirt, and one just above the left gleaner's head. All are below the glaze, meaning they were likely reproduced from the original painting or occurred in the process of creating *Untitled*.
- 20 Rauschenberg's treatment of existing paintings as two-dimensional source images is not unique to *Untitled*. In pieces such as *Untitled* [Mona Lisa], ca. 1952, the artist embraces low-quality photographic reproductions and souvenir postcards of paintings as versions of flattened artworks to incorporate into his compositions.
- 21 The kanji characters do not contain such painterly impressions. The metallic paint does contain visible brushstrokes; however, these are not visible from the front of the piece.

- 22 Okamoto, e-mail correspondence, November 20, 2018.
- 23 Ikegami describes Japanese contemporary art as a practice developed primarily through responses and reactions to foreign influence, information, and technology. She writes, "The question of originality has always been an issue in the discourse of Japanese art history ... In order to become practitioners of modern art, they first needed to acquire its basic vocabularies and keep up with its development, but doing so made them perpetual followers of Western art, which kept them from becoming equal and original participants in the world art scene." Hiroko Ikegami, *The Great Migrator: Robert Rauschenberg and the Global Rise of American Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2010), p. 179.
- 24 Ibid., p. 180. Throughout the text Ikegami refers to Shinohara's work as "Imitation Art" (her quotation marks).
- 25 Ibid.