

Guide to the Chun-Wuei Su Chien papers, 1977-1996

Summary

Creator:	Chien, Chun-Wuei Su, 1938-2005
Title:	Chun-Wuei Su Chien papers
Dates:	1977-1996, bulk 1982-1986
Call Number:	RRFA_05
Volume:	2.2 cubic ft. (6 manuscript boxes and 2 oversize folders)
Location:	Robert Rauschenberg Foundation 381 Lafayette Street, New York
Historical Abstract:	Chun-Wuei Su Chien was born in China in 1938 and moved to the United States in the 1960s. She worked as Rauschenberg's coordinator and translator during his 1982 trip to the Anhui province and subsequent ROCI CHINA and ROCI TIBET exhibitions in 1985.
Scope and Content Abstract:	The bulk of Chun-Wuei Su Chien's personal papers date from the years 1982 to 1986, when she worked closely with Robert Rauschenberg and his collaborator Donald Saff to coordinate the 1982 7 Characters edition project in China and subsequent Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange (ROCI) tour, especially ROCI CHINA and ROCI TIBET exhibitions. The ROCI materials document Chien's role as a liaison between Rauschenberg and agencies in China and Tibet, including the Ministry of Culture, the Chinese Exhibition Agency, local artists, and the Tibet Culture Bureau. The collection also contains a small amount of material from 1977 to 1996 documenting side projects related to Rauschenberg and unrelated personal

projects. Types of material in the collection include reports, incoming and outgoing correspondence, photo albums, legal agreements, travel documents, published statements and translations, newspaper and magazine articles, and Chien's notebooks containing planning notes and business cards.

- Arrangement:** Organized into 2 series: 1. ROCI and 2. Other Projects
- Restriction:** Portions of the collection are restricted. Please contact the Archives for more information on restricted folders.
- Preferred Citation:** Chun-Wuei Su Chien papers. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York.
- Processing Information Note:** Finding Aid was updated in January 2018

Historical Note

Born in 1938, Chun-Wuei Su Chien graduated from Taiwan University in 1960 and received her Master of Science degree from Tulane University in 1962. She moved to Lutherville, Maryland, in 1969. In the late 1970s or early 1980s, Chien met Robert Rauschenberg through a connection at the Maryland Institute College of Art. Chien assisted Rauschenberg as he traveled to the Anhui Province in China in the summer of 1982 to create his 7 Characters series. The trip was considered a prologue to his Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange (ROCI) project, 1985-1991. ROCI, Rauschenberg's major artistic and philanthropic focus from 1984 to 1991, was an evolving collaborative process of making and exhibiting art around the world. Due to political concerns surrounding ROCI CHINA, which was to be the first Western contemporary art exhibition in the country, government officials demanded that Chien be in charge of coordinating the exhibition. In 1984, Rauschenberg appointed her as the "curator and the sole agent in charge of selecting and arrangements" for ROCI CHINA. Chien also coordinated ROCI TIBET in 1985 and, afterwards, continued to work on other projects in Tibet.

Bibliography

- Ikegami, Hiroko. "ROCI East: Rauschenberg's Encounters in China." In *East-West Interchanges in American Art: A Long and Tumultuous Relationship, 176-189*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press, 2012.
- "Chien, Chun-wuei Su." *Baltimore Sun*, January 4, 2006. Accessed March 25,

2015. http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2006-01-04/news/0601040403_1_chun-chien-lutherville.

Subjects

Rauschenberg, Robert, 1925-2008
Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange
Art, Modern
Cultural relations

Container List

Series 1: ROCI, 1982-1989

1.58 cubic ft.

Series 1. ROCI contains records related to the planning, purpose, and public response to ROCI. The bulk of the series documents ROCI CHINA and ROCI TIBET (both 1985), but the papers also include clippings and mentions of ROCI MEXICO (1985), and photographs from ROCI MOSCOW (1989). The “Beijing and Lhasa Report,” shortened from its original label of “Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange in China (Beijing and Lhasa),” was compiled by Chien to document ROCI CHINA and ROCI TIBET, especially her own role as a translator and negotiator. Chien organized the report in chapters such as “Work on Catalogue” and “Beijing Opening,” often including a short narrative summary. Version two of the document is a slightly modified copy of the first version. Correspondence in this series includes letters to and from Rauschenberg and his main assistant, Terry Van Brunt. Chien also corresponded extensively with Trisha Brown Company, Inc. to coordinate the dance company’s Beijing performance in conjunction with ROCI CHINA. Chien’s planning notebooks and loose notes include logistics like travel documentation and addresses, in addition to a few early notes about the purpose of ROCI. Rauschenberg stated the purpose of ROCI in his own words in his 1984 “Letter of Intention,” also known as the “Tobago Statement.” One folder of unidentified material contains untranslated documents written in Chinese and Tibetan.

The series is arranged alphabetically.

Box	Folder	Title	Date
1	1	Announcement at the United Nations	1984
	2	Appointment of Chun-Wuei Su Chien as ROCI CHINA Curator	1984
		Beijing and Lhasa Report	
1	3	Drafts and Research	1984-1986

1	4-19	Version One (20 folders, 2 restricted)	1984-1986
2	1-2		
6	13-14		
2	3-8	Version Two (7 folders, 1 restricted)	1984-1986
6	15		
2	9	Catalog and Flyers	1985
		Catalog Information	
2	10	Artwork Captions	1985
3	1	Translations	1984
		Clippings	
3	2-3	China (2 folders)	1985-1986, undated
3	4	Mexico	1985
3	5	Translated Reviews	1985
3	6	United States	1982-1987, undated
		Correspondence	
3	7	General	1984-1986, undated
3	8	China Exhibition Agency	1984-1985, undated
3	9	Rauschenberg, Robert and Van Brunt, Terry	1983-1987, undated
3	10	Trisha Brown Company, Inc. (2 folders, 1 restricted)	1985
6	16	Expenses	
6	17	General (restricted)	1985, undated
3	11	Travel	1985
4	1	Letter of Intention, Tobago (copies)	1984
		Photographs	
4	2	Monastery Album	circa 1984
4	3-4	Moscow Album (2 folders)	1989
4	5	Russia Slides	1989
		Snapshots	
4	6	General	198?
4	7	Rauschenberg, Robert	198?
S1	1	Tibet Prints (oversize)	1985
4	8	Tibet Slides	1985
4	9	Unidentified Album	198?

		Planning	
6	18	Agreements with China Exhibition Agency (restricted)	1984-1985
4	10	Artwork Series Descriptions	circa 1985
6	19	Budget (restricted)	1984
6	20	Inventory (restricted)	1985
4	11	Invite Lists for National Gallery of Art Reception	1986
4	12-13	Notebooks (2 folders)	circa 1984-1985
4	14	Notes	circa 1984-1985
4	15	Press Contacts in Beijing	1985
4	16	Proposal by Sam Houston	undated
5	1	Travel Journal	1985
5	2	Progress Report by Rauschenberg (signed original)	1982
5	3	Statements by Donald Saff, Laba Pingcuo, Culture Bureau of Tibet, and Unidentified	1984-1985, undated
5	4	Unidentified	1985, undated

Series 2: Other Projects, 1977-1996

0.62 cubic ft.

Series 2. Other Projects contains three groups of material: personal papers unrelated to Rauschenberg, projects related to Rauschenberg separate from ROCI, and unidentified untranslated material. Rauschenberg's trip and collaboration with local papermakers in Anhui, China, in 1982 is documented in correspondence, photographs, notes, and ephemera from 7 Characters exhibitions after the trip. For further information on the 7 Characters project, see the Beijing and Lhasa Report in Series 1. Additional projects related to Rauschenberg include philanthropic programs in Tibet to which the artist made donations, and a proposed but unrealized Donald Saff exhibition in China following ROCI CHINA. These projects are mostly documented through incoming and outgoing correspondence. Chien's personal projects, including academic work and exhibitions of other artists, are documented in notebooks and correspondence.

The series is arranged alphabetically.

Box	Folder	Title	Date
5	5-8	Personal (6 folders, 2 restricted)	1977-1993,
6	21-22		undated

		Related to Rauschenberg	
		China Trip	
		Correspondence	
5	9	General	1982-1983
5	10	Rauschenberg, Robert	1982
		Gift	
S1	2	Photograph and Signed Copy of 1979 Tropic Cover (oversize)	1982
5	11	Notebook	1982
5	12	Photo Album (3 folders)	1982
6	1-2		
6	3	Seven Characters Exhibitions	1982, undated
6	4	Future Generations Tibet	1996
6	5	Proposed Donald Saff China Exhibition	1985-1986
6	6	Qomolangma Nature Preserve	1990-1991
6	7	Research	1980-1987
6	8	Snapshots	undated
6	9	TIME Magazine Cover	1986
6	10	UNICEF Tibet Donation	1980, undated
6	11-12	Unidentified (2 folders, 1 restricted)	undated