

Guide to the John Tanaka collection on Robert Rauschenberg, 1982 - 1998

Summary

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Title: | John Tanaka collection on Robert Rauschenberg |
| Call Number: | RRFA.17 |
| Dates: | (Bulk 1982 - 1998) |
| Extent: | 1 Cubic Feet 1 archival Box, 11 folders |
| Biographical Abstract: | John Shuzo Tanaka was born in Osaka, Japan in 1933. He was the liason for the 1983 artistic collaboration between the Otsuka Ohmi Ceramics Company (OOCC) and artist Robert Rauschenberg. |
| Scope and Content Abstract: | Materials in the collection of John Shuzo Tanaka were collected or created by Mr. Tanaka and consist of photo albums, Xeroxed Japanese press, manufacturers' catalogs, advertising proofs, a copy of a Robert Rauschenberg CV, and a museum catalog from the Otsuka Museum of Art. Spanning from 1982 – 1998, the collection documents the collaboration between Otsuka Ohmi Ceramics Company (OOCC) and artist Robert Rauschenberg that occurred in Shigaraki, Japan. |

Administrative Information

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Provenance: | Donated by John Tanaka in April 2022 |
| Language of Materials: | The press binder contains articles from local and national Japanese news organizations in their original Japanese. The museum catalog is also in Japanese. |
| Copyright: | Copyright belongs to the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation. |
| Preferred Citation: | John Tanaka collection on Robert Rauschenberg. RRFA 17. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York. |
| Processing Information: | Collection processed by Matthew Herzog. |

Given the impetus to preserve the collection's essence as a personal collection by Mr. Tanaka, photo albums and binders were kept in their original formats rather than rehoused. Archival rehousing was enacted to better preserve the loose photographs. They were provided without evidence of original order and reordered by subject.

Revision Statement: 05-31-2023 This record was revised by Calista Donohoe in May 2023 to reflect the addition of Shigaraki press event materials and OCCC advertising proofs.

Historical Note

John Shuzo Tanaka was born in Osaka, Japan in 1933. After acquiring an education in physics, Mr. Tanaka would become a sales representative in 1953, selling electron microscopes for the Hitachi Scientific Instruments company. By February 1969, he would be their sole representative for sales in the United States, moving first to Sunnyvale, California before landing in Chicago. By 1977, Mr. Tanaka would change companies, using his professional and educational careers to become the office manager for the Chicago branch of the Japan-based Otsuka Chemical Company, a subsidiary of the Otsuka Pharmaceutical Corporation that sold large patented ceramic plates from the Otsuka Ohmi Ceramic Company (OCCC). In 1981, the Chicago offices would move to New York and begin expanding the marketability of their ceramic plates beyond architecture.

Colleagues Mr. Minoru Okuda, Director of OCCC, and Mr. Tadayasu Sasayama, a modern ceramic artist in Shigaraki, approached Mr. Tanaka with the idea to invite contemporary artists to make use of the OCCC's product as an artistic medium – specifically utilizing their technique of reproducing high quality images on the ceramic surface. Mr. Tanaka began calling New York contemporary artists and after a chance meeting with artist Robert Rauschenberg in his New York office and a followup meeting at the ceramics manufacturing location in Shigaraki Japan, Mr. Tanaka would become a liaison and interpreter for OCCC during their 1983 artistic collaboration with Robert Rauschenberg. As documented in the collection, this would include shared travels across Japan and various press events.

After completing the collaboration, Mr. Tanaka would continue his work with the Otsuka Chemical Company until their New York offices closed in 1987. Following this, he would create his own company, Lovion International, in Stamford, CT. He continued to stay in touch with Robert Rauschenberg, and has since retired and plans a return to Japan in late 2022.

Scope and Content

Materials in the collection of John Shuzo Tanaka were collected or created by Mr. Tanaka and consist of photo albums, Xeroxed Japanese press, manufacturers' catalogs, advertising proofs, a copy of a Robert Rauschenberg CV, and a museum catalog from the Otsuka Museum of Art. Spanning from 1982 – 1998, the collection documents the collaboration between Otsuka Ohmi Ceramics Company (OCCC) and artist Robert Rauschenberg that occurred in Shigaraki, Japan.

Depicted events include Rauschenberg's initial visits in 1982 to Otsuka Ohmi Ceramic Studio in Shigaraki, Japan, and the subsequent studio activities and process shots taken during the collaboration including the creation of the Japanese Clayworks (1982/1985) and Japanese Recreational Clayworks

(1982-83/1985). The travels shared by Mr. Tanaka, Rauschenberg, and Terry Van Brunt, including trips to Naruto Kanko Kisen and Hotsumisakiji Temple. As well a press event celebrating the collaboration, hosted by the Kyoto Broadcasting Co. at the KBS Hall in Kyoto, Japan. Attendees included Masahito Otsuka – Former Director of the Otsuka Museum of Art and the founder of the Otsuka Pharmaceutical Corporation, and the Japanese artist Tar# Okamoto.

The OOCC manufacturers' catalogs provide information on cleaning and assembling the company's standard ceramic panel products. Commercial photographs document select Japanese Clayworks and Japanese Recreational Clayworks. Some are labelled providing their title, medium, and dimensions, and some are affixed to informational templates about OOCC.

The collection also includes photographs of the 1991 opening of the exhibition "Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange: ROCI USA" at The National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C. and early 1980's Xeroxed Japanese press reporting the collaboration, sourced from local and national Japanese press like Asahi Newspaper and The Japan Times in their original Japanese. Included as well is a 1998 Otsuka Museum of Art catalog portraying a survey of 100 artworks from the Museum's collection derived from OOCC's patented technique of reproducing high quality images of masterpieces on ceramic surfaces. Reproductions from this process were used by Rauschenberg when creating his Japanese Recreational Clayworks.

Artworks depicted include All Abordello Doze 1 (Japanese Recreational Claywork), 1982; All Abordello Doze 2 (Japanese Recreational Claywork), 1982; All Abordello Doze 3 (Japanese Recreational Claywork), 1982; All Abordello Doze 4 (Japanese Recreational Claywork), 1982; Axis: East (Japanese Claywork), 1982; Axis: South (Japanese Claywork), 1982; Axis: West (Japanese Claywork), 1982; North (Japanese Claywork), 1982; Dirt Shrine: East (Japanese Claywork), 1982; Dirt Shrine: North (Japanese Claywork), 1982; Drawing Room I (Japanese Claywork), 1982; Drawing Room II (Japanese Claywork), 1982; Gates: East (Japanese Claywork), 1982; Gates: South (Japanese Claywork), 1982; Moondragger: East (Japanese Claywork), 1982; Moondragger: South (Japanese Claywork), 1982; Stylite 1 (Japanese Claywork) 1982; Stylite 2 (Japanese Claywork) 1982.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged alphabetically.

Subjects

Art exhibitions.
Photographs.
Art, Modern.
Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange
Rauschenberg, Robert, 1925-2008

Collection Inventory

| Box | Folder | Title | Date |
|-----|--------|---|-------------|
| 1 | 1 | Exhibition and Dinner, Osaka, Japan, photo album | 1983 |
| | | Otsuka Ohmi Ceramic Company | |
| 1 | 2 | Initial Visit photo album | 1982 |
| 1 | 3 | Otsuka Museum of Art catalog | 1998 |
| 1 | 4 | "Rauschenberg Shigaraki" press binder, event photographs, and photo album (3 folders) | 1982 - 1983 |
| 1 | 5 | | |
| 1 | 6 | | |
| 1 | 7 | Residency photo albums (2 folders) | 1982 - 1983 |
| 1 | 8 | | |
| 1 | 9 | Residency & advertising proofs, photo album, 1982-1983 | 1982 - 1983 |
| 1 | 10 | "Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange" USA, Opening, Washington D.C. photo album | 1991 |
| 1 | 11 | Robert Rauschenberg Curriculum Vitae | 1983 |