Robert Rauschenberg Foundation

Hunter College MA in Art History

"Looking and Seeing at One Time" Locating Place in Robert Rauschenberg's *Capitol*

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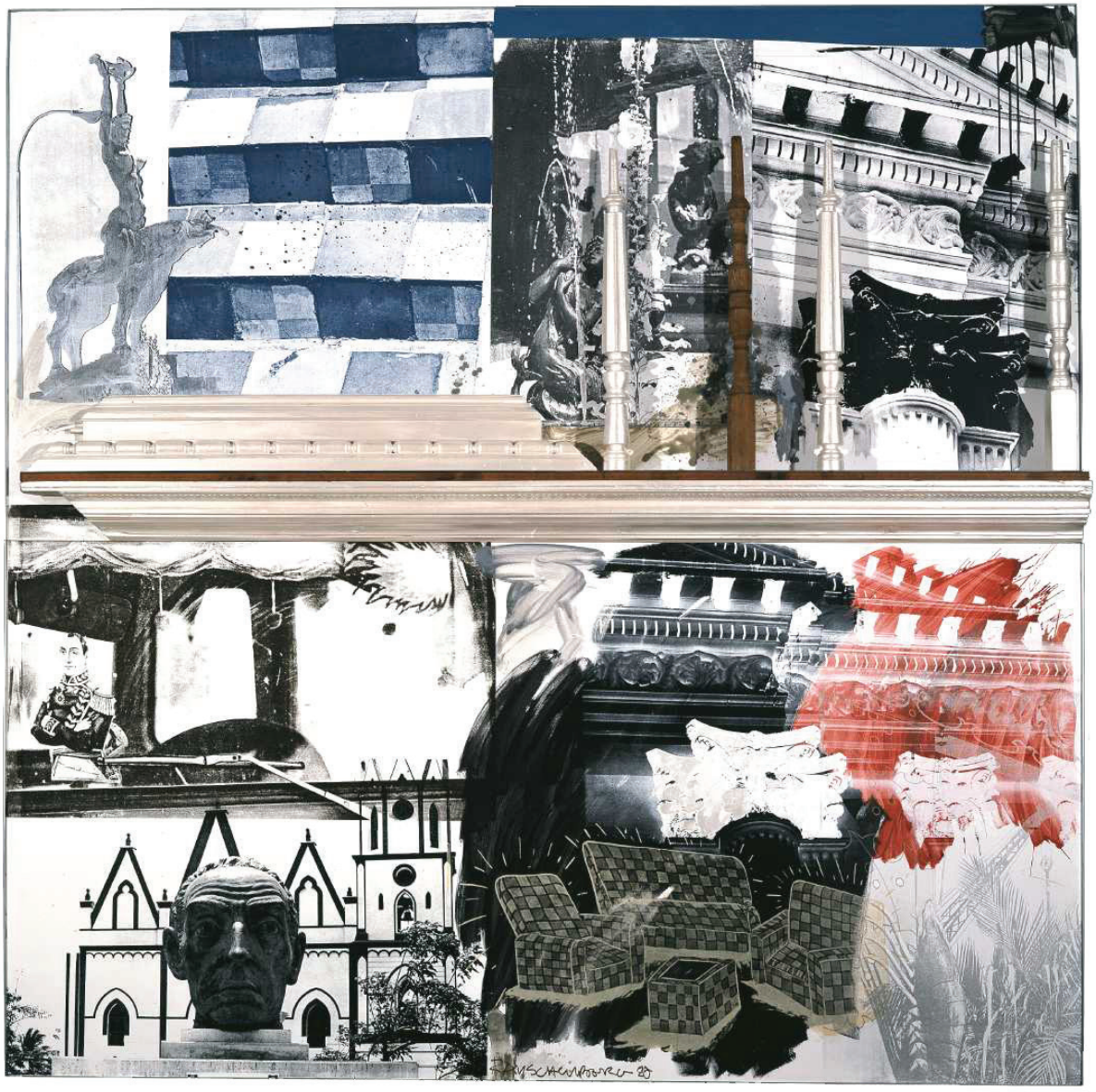

fig. 1

Robert Rauschenberg, *Capitol / ROCI VENEZUELA*, 1985. Silkscreen ink and acrylic on plywood with wood moldings and mirrored acrylic, 98 ⅝ × 98 ⅝ × 6 ¾ inches (250.5 × 250.5 × 17.1 cm). Robert Rauschenberg Foundation

"Looking and Seeing at One Time" Locating Place in Robert Rauschenberg's *Capitol*

> *Beauty is now underfoot wherever we take the trouble to look. (This is an American discovery.)*
>
> —John Cage[1]

A statue of the goddess María Lionza, architectural features from the Palacio Federal Legislativo, and the face of the revolutionary leader Simón Bolívar: these are all images that the Venezuelan public would have recognized as belonging to their capital city of Caracas (fig. 1). These symbolic images narrate Venezuela's independence and the "sometimes contradictory, but always fertile" combination of people and culture that make up the nation.[2] Yet this is no ordinary picture of Caracas, but rather one refracted through the photographic inclinations of Robert Rauschenberg. Traversing through the streets, camera in hand, Rauschenberg recognized his country within Caracas's neoclassical architecture, its popular signage, and the icons of a democratic nation stored in its built environment. Painted during the Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange (ROCI) project in 1985, *Capitol / ROCI VENEZUELA* challenges our understanding of place. By filling the borders of the large painting with his photographs of Caracas, Rauschenberg transcribes the urban fabric of the city as he saw it. Nonetheless, the generic cream molding attached to the painting's front destabilizes the veracity of this transcription by announcing the any-place nature of its origin.

Rauschenberg created ROCI to bring the world together through art, using his camera to capture and share global differences. This was an incredibly utopian goal and not without some success. In a defense of the *ROCI VENEZUELA* exhibition published alongside an image of *Capitol* in the Mexican newspaper *El Universal*, the Venezuelan critic Axel Stein lauds Rauschenberg's collages for "referring to iconographic sources of our varied culture" and creating "a global image of the country."[3] But as Stein suggests, the ambitions of ROCI depended on a unified way of seeing difference.[4] Rauschenberg's vision was propelled by the creative concerns he revisited throughout his career—looking for differences and always seeming to find versions of the same. In *Capitol*, while Rauschenberg displays his experience of Caracas, he also employs references to earlier works, such as *Wall Street* (1961) and *Trophy V (for Jasper Johns)* (1962), made when the urban disorder of New York City formed many of his

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fig. 2

Robert Rauschenberg, *ROCI Announcement Print*, 1984. Lithograph, 25 ¾ × 23 inches (65.4 × 58.4 cm). From an unnumbered edition produced by Universal Limited Art Editions, West Islip, New York

fig. 3

Rauschenberg presenting *ROCI Announcement Print* (1984) to UN Secretary General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar on the occasion of the inauguration of ROCI at the United Nations, New York, December 1984. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York

iconographic and aesthetic operations. As a result, this vision of Caracas is, at once, grounded in the cultural history of Venezuela and in Rauschenberg's American nationalism.

In December 1984, Rauschenberg inaugurated ROCI at the United Nations by presenting the *ROCI Announcement Print*, a color lithograph featuring photographs taken during his travels in the United States and abroad (figs. 2 and 3). In the announcement, Rauschenberg characterizes ROCI as a "traveling exhibit of art by me" and emphasizes the peaceful powers of art: "Art is educational, is in all languages at once, provocative and enlightening even when first not understood . . . [it] will bring us all closer."[5] The setting of the announcement highlights how Rauschenberg conceived of himself not only as an artist but also as an ambassador to the world. But an ambassador of what exactly: the United States or art? While Rauschenberg may have wished to untangle the project from the interests of the U.S. government, he was received as a representative of American art.[6] By framing ROCI as an "aggressive art attack" meant to "produce peace and understanding," Rauschenberg ensured that the project was judged on these weighty ideals.[7]

Six months after the UN announcement, Rauschenberg arrived in Venezuela, the third stop on his journey. For research, Rauschenberg traveled to each country prior to the exhibition, where he photographed and collected materials for his paintings. During the twelve-day trip to Venezuela, Rauschenberg took pictures in Caracas and Maracaibo and spent the majority of his time in the Amazon region, visiting various indigenous tribes. Most of the photographs of Caracas feature the city's central neighborhoods that were close to the Hilton hotel where he stayed. When he wasn't exploring the city, Rauschenberg and his team met with various stakeholders in Venezuelan art and politics, including the art collector Patty Cisneros Oystavo.[8] Although Rauschenberg met with the Venezuelan artist Miguel von Dangel, there is no evidence that he participated in any substantial exchange with local artists or artisans.

fig. 4

Top: Artworks for *ROCI CHILE* arriving at Santiago airport; bottom: artworks for *ROCI VENEZUELA* arriving at Caracas airport, all 1985. Photos: Charles Yoder. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation

Just weeks after his research trip to Venezuela, Rauschenberg traveled to Santiago for the opening of *ROCI CHILE* at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes (July 17–August 18, 1985). The show elicited a great deal of criticism from the Chilean public, especially because of Rauschenberg's willingness to exhibit in a country facing extreme political and social unrest under the Augusto Pinochet dictatorship.[9] Additionally, many Chilean artists felt the project was an example of American imperialism, one act in a long history of the American government meddling in Latin American politics and culture. Following the tumultuous opening, Rauschenberg returned to his studio in Captiva, Florida, and mined his photographs from Venezuela to create twelve paintings that would be exhibited at the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Caracas in September of that same year (September 12–October 27, 1985). Donald Saff, the artistic director of ROCI, later recalled that Rauschenberg "decided to balance the shadow cast by Chile's dictatorship with an exploration and exhibition in South America's oldest, albeit youthful, democracy, Venezuela."[10]

Still, Rauschenberg's 1985 arrival in Venezuela followed Viernes Negro (Black Friday), which happened two years earlier, when Venezuela's bolivar was substantially devalued due, in large part, to the falling price of oil. There are few references to oil in the *ROCI VENEZUELA* paintings, but perhaps the crisis of a petrol state emerges from the story of the artwork's transportation from Chile to Venezuela.[11] The exhibition in Caracas was delayed until the government offered air force planes to transport the artwork on the condition that ROCI funds would be used to pay for the fuel.[12] The cost amounted to over $40,000 paid fully in cash upon the artworks' arrival. Loaded with green crates stamped with an image of Rauschenberg's pet turtle, the air force planes reflected the central concerns of ROCI. As Rauschenberg observed enthusiastically, "Maybe that's the way ROCI can function—just keep all the armies and navies and military busy hauling art around . . . so they won't have time to be aggressive militarily" (fig. 4).[13]

As an institution, there is much to criticize about ROCI. But I do not find this lens entirely useful for investigating the works produced by Rauschenberg during this seven-year project. The political language of ROCI established in its formal proclamations is not the same language Rauschenberg uses within his paintings and photographs. If Rauschenberg hoped to communicate through his art, then perhaps it is more productive to explore the kind of looking and seeing that he proposed.

Rauschenberg assembled *Capitol* by silk-screening nine photographs that he had taken while in Caracas onto a large wood board washed with white paint. A monochrome black-and-white palette dominates the nearly nine-by-nine-foot painting, accentuating the silkscreens as photographic forms. The composition's gridlike structure reiterates the photographic frame as an ordering device, just as moments of overlay, quickly applied brushstrokes, and bursts of blue and red paint identify the urban disorder of Caracas escaping the edges of that frame. "I don't crop," Rauschenberg declared in 1983. "Photography is like diamond cutting. If you miss you miss."[14] The oppositional effect between the gestural quality of the collage and the photographic frame is particularly obvious in the bottom right quadrant, where three silkscreens are layered over swaths of black and red brushed-on paint. Cream-colored wood moldings bisect the painting as four wood chair legs stand upright like columns with nothing to support. Rauschenberg's three-dimensional addition casts shadows onto the painting's surface and as a result creates a tension between the real and the represented.

Photography was always central to Rauschenberg's vision: "I've never stopped being a photographer," he declared in 1981.[15] For an artist who claimed "the world is a painting" in *Vogue* magazine in 1965 and similarly stated "the world is my palette" in *ARTnews* in 1983, the camera was always essential for his conception of the globe (figs. 5 and 6). Back in 1952, when Rauschenberg left for Rome with Cy Twombly, he decided he would not paint but instead take

fig. 5

Opening spread of Lawrence Alloway article, "'The World Is a Painting': Rauschenberg," *Vogue*, October 15, 1965

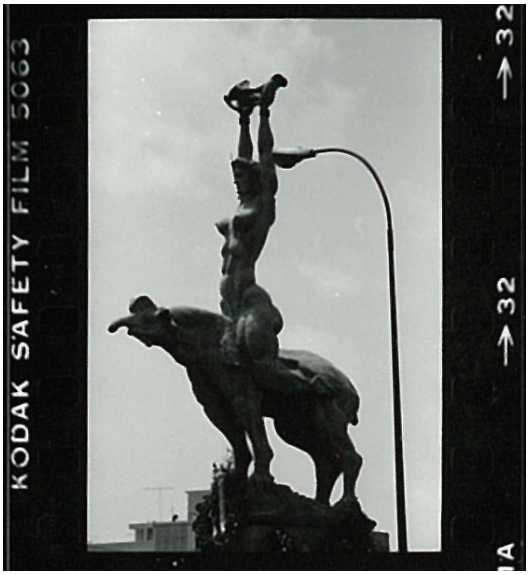
fig. 6

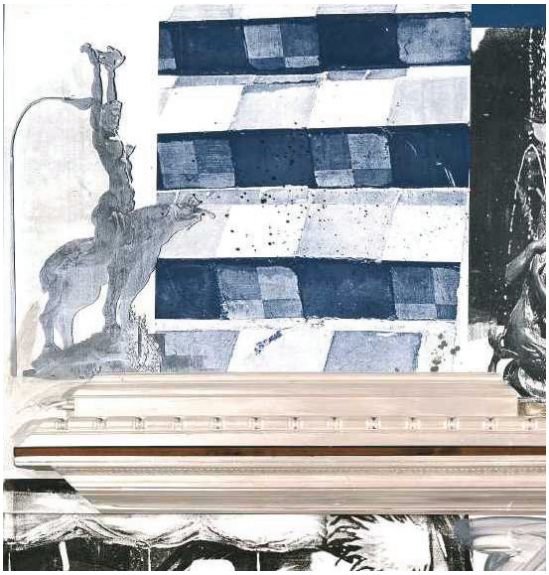
Cover *ARTnews* magazine, February 1983

"THE WORLD IS A PAINTING"

RAUSCHENBERG

BY LAWRENCE ALLOWAY





photographs.[16] Upon returning to New York, Rauschenberg continued to take photographs, though he would not return to photography in earnest until 1979, when he created a photographic slideshow for the set of Trisha Brown's *Glacial Decoy*. For Rauschenberg, this rediscovery of the camera engendered a desire to look, his gaze reaching farther and farther beyond the confines of the studio.[17] During ROCI, photography was a method of collaboration, a way to integrate the materials of the world into the artist's paintings.

On his first day in Caracas, Rauschenberg photographed Venezuelan artist Alejandro Colina's statue of María Lionza, an indigenous goddess of fertility who is shown riding a tapir while holding a pelvis overhead. Made in 1951, the statue was moved from its original location at the Universidad Central de Venezuela to the Francisco Fajardo Highway in 1953 in order to prevent followers of the María Lionza religion from making a pilgrimage to the campus (fig. 7).[18] While the photograph eliminates the highway from view, the streetlamp is a reminder of the monument's peculiar placement. Colina's statue represented a period of modernization in Caracas, when construction projects included large buildings in the international style and public works highlighting indigenous myths and traditions.[19] According to the historian and curator Ariel Jiménez, artists like Colina who featured "the *indio*" at this time were representing "the origin of another nation that had not yet found its true place, and was anathema to everything symbolizing progress in the cities."[20] In fact, Rauschenberg layers his photograph of María Lionza over an abstract photograph of the patterned facade of one of Caracas's skyscrapers in *Capitol* (fig. 8). Together the two images read as a reference to Venezuela's history of nation-building and the heterogeneous monumental forms stored in its built environment.

Many of the other photographs silkscreened onto *Capitol* either feature an image of Bolívar or were taken at the Plaza Bolívar in central Caracas. Situated in the historic center of the city, the plaza was renamed after Bolívar in 1842 to commemorate the leader known colloquially as *El Libertador* (The liberator) for his role in leading Venezuela to independence from the

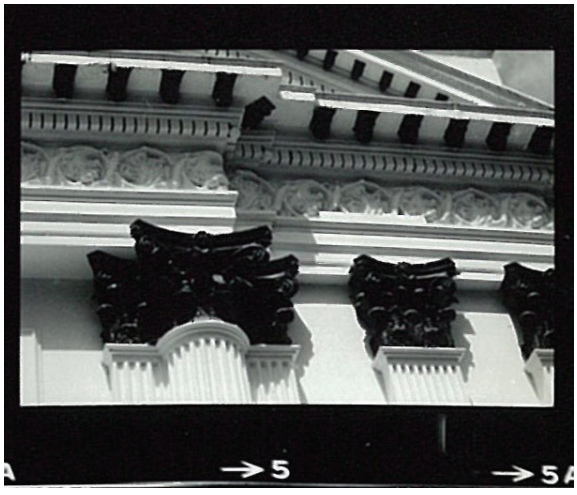
fig. 7

Black-and-white contact sheet, Venezuela, June 1985 (detail). Photo: Robert Rauschenberg. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York

fig. 8

Robert Rauschenberg, *Capitol / ROCI VENEZUELA*, 1985 (detail)

Spanish empire.[21] Meandering through the tree-covered plaza, Rauschenberg photographed its important sites, including a neoclassical fountain stationed at the plaza's center (fig. 9). In the photograph, a blooming Venezuelan hollyhock plant bisects the frame, juxtaposing its natural opulence with the ornamental drama of the fountain. The contact sheets from this excursion reveal that the fountain may have been significant to his memory of the visit. After handing over his camera to someone on his team, most likely his assistant and partner Terry Van Brunt, Rauschenberg proceeded to pose near the fountain for a number of frames (fig. 10). This incident is a useful reminder that the photographs are markers of Rauschenberg's experiences, and they would have conjured those memories as he laid them into the painting.[22] The ornate capitals of the Palacio Federal Legislativo, located on the west side of the plaza, are featured prominently in the painting as two silkscreened photographs rendered as both a positive and negative exposure (figs. 11 and 12).



figs. 9–12

Black-and-white contact sheet, Venezuela, June 1985 (details). Photo: Robert Rauschenberg. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York

fig. 13–14

Black-and-white contact sheet, Venezuela, June 1985 (detail). Photo: Robert Rauschenberg. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York

fig. 15

Robert Rauschenberg, *Venezuela*, 1985. Gelatin silver print, 13 x 19 inches (33 x 48.3 cm). Robert Rauschenberg Foundation

While Rauschenberg photographed the famous equestrian monument of Bolívar, he did not include this image of Bolívar in *Capitol* (fig. 13). Instead, he chose to represent Bolívar as a saint of the people rather than as an official figure. Two silkscreened photographs stacked on the bottom left show popular monuments of Bolívar: a small illustration displayed on the dashboard of a car and an unofficial statue that was likely constructed during the 1983 bicentennial celebration of Bolívar's birth (figs. 14 and 15).[23] Altogether, the entire bottom section of the painting is a layered collection of Caracas's vernacular imagery: wall paintings, handmade sculptures, and printed media. Notably, one of the photographs silkscreened in a translucent gray entirely flattens the image of a painted oil rig covered by the leaves of a tropical plant and a sculpture of a lobster. This photograph is one of Rauschenberg's only references to the primary industry and wealth generator in Venezuela, though it reads more formally as indication of the artist's interest in the strange combinations of materials in an urban landscape.

In addition to the twelve *ROCI VENEZUELA* paintings, the exhibition at the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Caracas included artworks from the previous ROCI projects (Mexico and Chile), as well as a variety of Rauschenberg's paintings, sculptures, prints, and photographs made in America and abroad. Upon entering the museum, visitors would have first passed by walls densely packed with Rauschenberg's photographs.[24] The photographs were loosely grouped by location: Venezuela; Rauschenberg's world travels prior to ROCI, including Japan,

Morocco, and Thailand; and finally a small wall devoted to the United States. The importance of photography to ROCI was not only in the production of the artworks but also the installation. The installation hints to Rauschenberg's view of photography as a language that could be easily understood, which can be traced back to Rauschenberg's 1982 trip to China, where the idea for ROCI was famously born. In this context, Rauschenberg asked Saff to prime the Chinese art students with a lecture on his photography. According to Saff, Rauschenberg believed that his photography would be "very accessible" to the Chinese audience and would make it easier for him "to show them the painting and sculpture."[25] The installation in Caracas includes a similar operation, and the walls of photographs could have been conceived as a way of preparing the visitors to view more complex works. On the other hand, Rauschenberg may have appreciated how the entry walls filled with photographs provided evidence of his direct experience in Venezuela and, inadvertently, his access to the world.

fig. 16

Robert Rauschenberg's U.S. passport issued on July 29, 1983. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York

While Rauschenberg intended to "introduce the world to itself through his art," he may have only succeeded in introducing the world to the privileged status of the American passport.[26] Rauschenberg's U.S. passport used between 1983 and 1993 includes stamps from over eighteen countries, most of which he also took photographs in (fig. 16). In this sense, Rauschenberg's photographs, no matter what country they depict, are inherently American. For Rauschenberg's ability to travel—to gaze at and take photographs of any culture—was enabled by his American identity and the power it held in a globalizing world. Here, the photographs describe globalization as an American project just as they mourn the loss of the global differences Rauschenberg was so keen to identify.

To follow Rauschenberg's logic that the accessible facts of a photograph situate the complex collage of images and objects in his paintings, does *Capitol* describe Rauschenberg's America as much as it describes the urban environment of Caracas? If so, perhaps the title is a clue. In U.S. English, "capitol" spelled with an "o" is used to describe the Capitol building in Washington, D.C. Built in a French neoclassical style, the Capitol is the house for the legislative branch of the U.S. government and a popular icon of American democracy. The U.S. Capitol is featured in a number of Rauschenberg's artworks, including the Combine *Black Market* (1961) that incorporates a photograph of the building as a possible reference for American President John F. Kennedy's inauguration, the collage *National Symphony Ball* (1966), and the lithograph print *Presidential Inauguration* (1977). The use of the American imagery, like the Capitol, combined with the socially engaged aims of many of Rauschenberg's artworks, may be the reason curator Walter Hopps described Rauschenberg as the quintessential American artist: "Bob who seemed to me the great example of the 'Citizen Artist,' in the eighteenth-century sense that our Founding Fathers so revered, someone who felt a great responsibility to life of his time, who was deeply involved in it in all sorts of different ways."[27]

ROCI was the ultimate fulfillment of this characterization of Rauschenberg as the American "Citizen Artist." It is not surprising that, when he walked in Plaza Bolívar in Caracas, he was attracted to the magisterial structures meant to mark Venezuela's democratic republic. During the nineteenth century, the newly independent republic of Venezuela built the plaza and the legislative palace in the French neoclassical style just as Washington, D.C. was designed to emulate European capitals, such as Paris and Rome.[28] The Palacio Federal Legislativo even took on the American name for the house of democracy, as it's commonly referred to as *El Capitolio*. The Spanish name for Rauschenberg's *Capitol* (*Capitolio*) would have intensified the reference to the building for the Venezuelan audience, just as the name may have solidified the work as a reference to the Washington, D.C. building for the artist.[29]

"Venezuela has been the richest inspirational country that I've been to," Rauschenberg remarked, ". . . one of the reasons it was so inspiring, was the contrast of the different places that I went to."[30] From the Indigenous tribes in the Amazon to a movie theater in Caracas, Rauschenberg seemed to find the unequal effects of modernization supremely inspiring.[31] His effort to display those differences on the same plane within his paintings, most overtly in *Urban / Interior Network / ROCI VENEZUELA* (1985), was part of his radical way of seeing the world. In this sense, his picture planes have a unifying effect, composing the "disparate visual facts" found in his photographs into a single experience for the viewer.[32] This interest in the disjunctive visual relationship that can pull things together is evident not only in the ROCI paintings but also the institutional framework of ROCI as a whole. By traveling from country to country with the goal of revealing each nation's unique characteristics, Rauschenberg positioned the nation-state as a way of preserving difference. In this regard, the suite of Venezuela paintings meant to identify the diversity of a nation simultaneously brought acute visibility to the American project of globalization, where difference is universally available.[33]

During *ROCI VENEZUELA*, the American art historian David Galloway gave a filmed lecture while touring through the exhibition. Opening the lecture by standing next to *National Spinning / Red / Spring (Cardboard)* (1971) constructed out of cardboard boxes with a map of the continental United States, Galloway moves toward the Venezuela paintings and states, "The streets of Caracas excited Rauschenberg, in part, because they reminded him of the streets of New York. Because there one saw the incredibly extreme contrast within a single city block that activates his visual imagination" (fig. 17).[34] This statement locates *Capitol* within Rauschenberg's proclivity for the language of urban life, or what art critic Brian O'Doherty refers to as the artist's "vernacular glance."[35] If Rauschenberg was walking through Caracas thinking of New York City, then the Combine element of *Capitol* deserves more attention as a possible reference to the artist's earlier works exploring two- and three-dimensionality while enmeshed in the American city's everchanging landscape.

fig. 17

Video still from *ROCI VENEZUELA* David Galloway lecture, 1985

fig. 18

Robert Rauschenberg, *Wall Street*, 1961. Combine: Oil, paper, zinc sheet metal, fabric, and string on canvas with wood plank, rubber, and fire hose, 62 ⅛ × 72 × 9 ⅞ inches (157.8 × 182.9 × 25.1 cm). Museum Ludwig, Cologne

The inclusion of the wooden moldings running across the picture plane of *Capitol* with four chair legs positioned as if they were columns of a building in a painting already imbued with architectural references, is an additional pun. This trompe l'oeil gesture makes fun by comparing the flat, yet real, column of the Palacio Federal Legislativo with the dimension of the chair legs, fake representations for columns. The moldings create an architectural space out of the planarity of the painting's surface, insisting on its hybridity as both a wall and a window. In this sense, the architectural feature works to break down the boundary between the outside and the inside, so that the painting becomes "a place, or locale, where this kind of equalization can happen."[36] It is this operation that maintains the silkscreened photographs as both imagery of space and objects within space. Within *Capitol*'s frame, location becomes transportable—the viewer is both within the streets of Caracas and inside Rauschenberg's studio with his travel photographs tacked on a wall.

In the late Combines from 1961 to 1962, Rauschenberg similarly utilizes architectural fragments and trompe l'oeil motifs to explore the connection between place and memory. During this period, Rauschenberg was moving from studio to studio as buildings all around Lower Manhattan were being demolished to make way for the growing number of residential and commercial buildings towering above the skyline.[37] The art historian Joshua Shannon's text *Black Market* analyzes Rauschenberg's relationship to the changing urban environment of Lower Manhattan at this time, describing how the artist "was leaping into the demolition sites all around him, pulling out rusting ventilation ducts, worn bits of industrial machinery, and neoclassical architectural details."[38] This approach is exemplified in Rauschenberg's *Wall Street* (1961), which not only references a particular site near his studio but also features architectural details of an older New York, scraps of which Rauschenberg found in the ruins of the demolished buildings all around his neighborhood (fig. 18).[39] The painted black building fragment seems to serve a proper architectural function supporting the flat swath of black paint running across the top of the painting. Much like the chair-leg columns of *Capitol*, Rauschenberg's play with two- and three-dimensionality in *Wall Street* delights in revealing the obsolete functionality of the architectural supports within a wall-like painting. If this Combine is a meditation on a disappearing New York, then *Capitol* similarly describes a city as Rauschenberg found it.

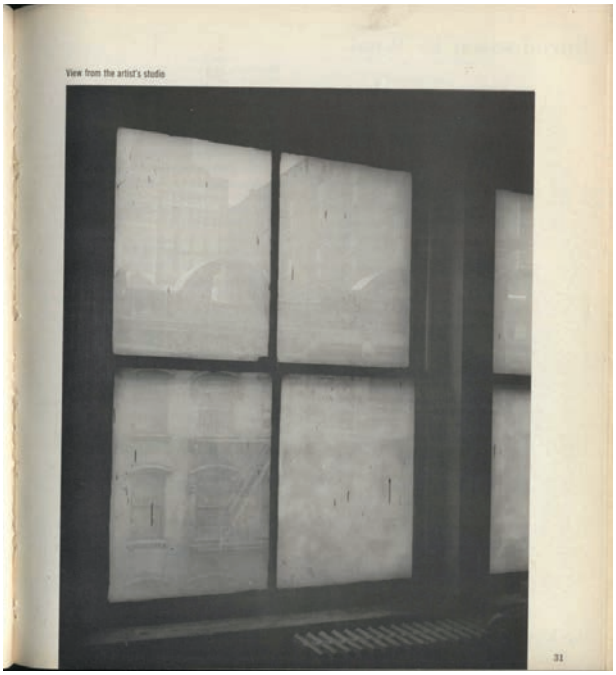


fig. 19

Robert Rauschenberg, *Trophy V (for Jasper Johns)*, 1962. Combine: oil, fabric, cardboard box, printed paper, plastic ruler, and metal-frame window on canvas, 78 × 72 × 7 ½ inches (198.1 × 182.9 × 19.1 cm). Honolulu Museum of Art

fig. 20

Robert Rauschenberg's photo essay "Random Order" (1963), page 31

The movement toward architecture within Rauschenberg's paintings is even more obvious in *Trophy V (for Jasper Johns)* made one year later in 1962 (fig. 19). With the insertion of a metal-framed window into the canvas, the surface of the painting becomes the flat wall of the studio where Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns shared ideas and companionship.[40] A painted stencil of the continental United States is a clear reference to Johns's *Map* (1961) and serves as a useful reminder for their shared concern of rearticulating American iconography.[41] Working within the American trompe l'oeil tradition, Rauschenberg tacks on rectangular forms to the wall's surface, playfully attaching both flat and three-dimensional objects that extend into the viewer's space. With the use of paint and collaged materials, Rauschenberg advertises his virtuosity in evoking the illusion of depth, while simultaneously pronouncing the flatness of that illusion. With the cardboard box attached just right of the metal-framed window, the darkly painted flaps of the box mimic the recessive space of a window, and yet this effect is nullified by the fact that the box extends in the opposite direction toward the viewer. In another "window" on the far right of the painting, Rauschenberg paints a traffic light, successfully bringing that which is going on outside the window into the studio.[42]

Although there are no photographs embedded in *Trophy V*, the framing edge of the painting is informed by the medium of photography. If the embedded window frame successfully transforms the painting into architecture, it seems that Rauschenberg's almost square frame is informed by the cropping edge of his Rolliecord camera.[43] That is to say, the painting more closely resembles a photograph of an interior space, rather than a construction of its architecture. As the art historian Branden W. Joseph notes,

> [W]hat perhaps most profoundly relates Rauschenberg's photographs and Combines is a framing edge that implies both separation and continuity, both a seamless relation to the world outside itself and a cut, break, gap, or bifurcation from it, what might be called a contingent framing edge as opposed to a formalist one.[44]

This contingent framing edge is, at its essence, a conceptual device Rauschenberg uses to respond to his environment. Just one year after he finished *Trophy V*, Rauschenberg published the photo essay "Random Order," which art critic Rosalind Krauss calls a manifesto for Rauschenberg's shift to photography.[45] There is a remarkable similarity between the final page, displaying a "view from the artist's studio" (fig. 20), and the perceptual concerns of *Trophy V*. Both share the contingent framing edge and the desire to picture the outside from within.

For Rauschenberg, the frame is a method of working ("You wait until life is in the frame, then you have permission to click"), but it is also a way of seeing the world, of providing a space that can be filled up ("You click when you believe it's the truth").[46] Within the mechanisms of the camera, it is a process of reflection and transcription, and, in this sense, the camera provided Rauschenberg a way of collaborating with everything that was going on outside his studio. This way of seeing led American composer John Cage to characterize Rauschenberg's work as "more like a photograph than a photograph is," and, in reference to his early paintings, Rauschenberg himself declared "a picture is more like the real world when it's made out of the real world."[47] On the surface of Rauschenberg's paintings the immediacy of experience and the slow accumulations of history are built up within a single frame.

In *Capitol*, as in his late paintings, Rauschenberg constructs a locale for the debris of his experiences. Although many of Rauschenberg's photographs seem to reference the particularities of Caracas's urban environment, *Capitol* is not concerned with the singularity of place. At the heart of ROCI was a peacemaking project based on Rauschenberg's belief in the reciprocal act of looking and seeing at one time.[48] This utopian form of communication is put into action within *Capitol*, where Rauschenberg shares his memories of looking in Caracas as a way of seeing his America.

ENDNOTES

1 John Cage, "On Robert Rauschenberg, Artist, and His Work" in *Silence: Lectures and Writings* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1973), p. 98.

2 Arturo Úslar Pietri, "Creative Mestizaje," trans. Jen Hofer, in *Alfredo Boulton and His Contemporaries: Critical Dialogues in Venezuelan Art, 1912–1974*, ed. Ariel Jiménez (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2008), p. 124.

3 Axel Stein, "Venezuela: Cultura Infatada," *El Universal*, October 28, 1985; my translation. Found in "Sample" press kit created by ROCI staff documenting the project, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives.

4 The defense was not without criticism, as Robert Rauschenberg was described as a product of American culture where "[Americans] enrich their culture with any foreign element that suits them." Ibid.; my translation.

5 Robert Rauschenberg's handwritten draft of his speech given at the United Nations, announcing the Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange (ROCI) project, December 1984, A783, RRFA-01-Box WN6, Robert Rauschenberg Papers, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives.

6 For an account of the relationship between Robert Rauschenberg's work and American nationalism, see Christian J. Mamiya, "We the People: The Art of Robert Rauschenberg and the Construction of American National Identity," *American Art* 7, no. 3 (Summer 1993). pp. 41–63.

7 Robert Rauschenberg's handwritten draft of a statement about Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange (ROCI), 1982, A143, RRFA-01-Box WN6, Robert Rauschenberg Papers, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives.

8 Rauschenberg's activities included a dinner party hosted by the politician Enrique Tejera París with the writer and critic María Ramírez Ribes, a lunch with the artist Miguel von Dangel, and finally a dinner with the art collector Patty Cisneros Oystavo. Terry Van Brunt, Venezuela Itinerary, RRFA-01, Biographical Materials, Calendars, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives. "ROCI Venezuela Travelogue," 1985, 85.V077.00, Audiovisual Collection, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives.

9 Robert S. Mattison, "ROCI in Chile," in *Robert Rauschenberg: Breaking Boundaries* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 221.

10 Robert Rauschenberg and Donald Saff, "A Conversation About Art and ROCI," in *Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange*, exh. cat. (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1991), p. 168.

11 According to Terry Van Brunt's diarylike itinerary, there was an attempt to arrange a tour of the oil fields two days before Rauschenberg returned to Florida: "In Hotel—try to arrange tour at oil fields, Caa Nat." Terry Van Brunt, Venezuela Itinerary, RRFA-01, Biographical Materials, Calendars, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives.

12 Rauschenberg and Saff, "A Conversation About Art and ROCI," p. 21.

13 Ibid., p. 168.

14 Robert Rauschenberg quoted in Paul Raedeke, "Interview with Rauschenberg," *Photo Metro* 2, no. 13 (October 1983), p. 16.

15 Barbara Rose, *An Interview with Robert Rauschenberg* (New York: Vintage, 1987), p. 75.

16 Calvin Tomkins, *Off the Wall: Robert Rauschenberg and the Art World of Our Time* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, 1980), p. 79.

17 "I designed a dance set for Trisha Brown and Co. that required several hundred unique photographs . . . I became addicted again. It has heightened my desire to look . . . Henri Cartier-Bresson said shyly that he only used his camera as an excuse to see the world." Robert Rauschenberg quoted in Alain Sayag, "Interview with Robert Rauschenberg: 1981 January 9 at Captiva Island, Florida," in *Robert Rauschenberg Photographs* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), unpaginated.

18 Roger Canais, *A Goddess in Motion: Visual Creativity in the Cult of Maria Lionza* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017), p. 78.

19 Marco Negrón, "Transformations in Venezuelan Territorial Development and Construction from the 1920s to the 1950s," trans. Kristina Cordero, in *Alfredo Boulton and His Contemporaries: Critical Dialogues in Venezuelan Art, 1912–1974*, ed. Ariel Jiménez (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2008), p. 56.

20 "Indio" is a Spanish term used to refer to indigenous peoples from the territories colonized by the Spanish empire. Ariel Jiménez, "Figuring Venezuela," trans. Jen Hofer, in *Alfredo Boulton and His Contemporaries*, p. 89.

21 Bolívar's political and military campaign led the currently known countries of Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Peru, and Venezuela to independence in the early nineteenth century, and he is seen as a cultural icon throughout Latin America.

22 Responding to a question on how his work relates to his past experiences, Robert Rauschenberg replied, "You can't help that. I remember the particular things and places that I have photographed that then

reemerge in my work." Rauschenberg quoted in Julia Brown Turrell, "Talking to Robert Rauschenberg," in *Rauschenberg Sculpture*, exh. cat. (Fort Worth, Tex.: Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, 1995), p. 74.

23 Gabriela Rangel suggested that the large statue of a head was one of the unofficial statues of Simón Bolívar that popped up all around the city for the bicentennial celebration. Rangel, in conversation with author, April 7, 2021.

24 See *Rauschenberg*, exh. cat. (Caracas: Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Caracas, 1985), unpaginated.

25 Rauschenberg quoted in "The Reminiscences of Donald Saff, August 15–16, 2013," *Robert Rauschenberg Oral History Project*, conducted in collaboration with INCITE/Columbia Center for Oral History Research, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, pp. 111–12.

26 Ibid., p. 106.

27 Walter Hopps made this comment when he was curator at the National Collection of Fine Arts in Washington, D.C. and decided to organize a major retrospective of Rauschenberg to coincide with the bicentennial celebration of American independence (1976), quoted in Tomkins, *Off the Wall*, p. 297.

28 The Republic of Venezuela was declared independent a number of times between 1811 and 1830; notably in 1817, Simón Bolivar established the Third Republic of Venezuela, which lasted two years. The Palacio Federal Legislativo was completed in 1877 during the presidency of Antonio Guzmán Blanco.

29 All of Rauschenberg's artworks are listed with English and Spanish titles in *Rauschenberg*, exh. cat. (Caracas: Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Caracas, 1985), unpaginated.

30 "ROCI compilation, circa 1988," 86.V021.00, Audiovisual Collection, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives.

31 Based on the calendar itinerary and video documentary footage by Terry Van Brunt, Robert Rauschenberg visited a movie theater in Caracas during his research trip.

32 Robert Rauschenberg, "Note on painting," 1963. A73, RRFA01, Robert Rauschenberg Papers, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives.

33 In 1995, Rauschenberg reiterated the necessity of difference within his working process as directly in opposition to globalization. "We're going to end up with a generic world. Where everybody's going to be exactly the same . . . seeing everything leveled down to the same attitude is going to be the most depressing. I look forward to the differences, I need them, I respect them." Robert Rauschenberg quoted in Turrell, "Talking to Robert Rauschenberg," p. 68.

34 "ROCI Venezuela David Galloway lecture," 1985, 85.V045.00, Audiovisual Collection, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives.

35 Brian O'Doherty, "Rauschenberg and the Vernacular Glance," *Art in America* 61, no. 5, (September–October 1973), p. 82.

36 While Rosalind Krauss wrote this quote in reference to *Small Rebus* as an example of how various photographs collect like debris on Robert Rauschenberg's flatbed surfaces, this invocation of a locale where disparate images are equalized can be similarly applied to *Capitol*. Rosalind Krauss, "Rauschenberg and the Materialized Image," in *Robert Rauschenberg*, ed. Branden W. Joseph (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002), p. 50.

37 Joshua Shannon, "Black Market: Rauschenberg," in *The Disappearance of Objects: New York Art and the Rise of the Postmodern City* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 125.

38 Ibid., p. 126.

39 Joshua Shannon notes that the building fragment resembles the decorative stone supports of a building just across the street from Robert Rauschenberg's Pearl Street studio, ibid., p. 119.

40 This painting was finished around the time Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns's relationship ended, and Rauschenberg moved to a studio on Broadway, no longer sharing the same building with Johns, as he had done for many years.

41 The painting also includes two other references to Jasper Johns: the gray painted ruler is a shorthand for Johns's *Painting With Ruler and 'Gray'* (1960), and the drawing on paper adhered to the canvas's surface seems to reference the careful marks of Johns's *Target* paintings (1955–) and could be one of his sketches.

42 "I've always wanted my work to look more like what's going on outside the window than in my studio." Robert Rauschenberg quoted in Raedeke, "Interview with Rauschenberg," p. 17.

43 Robert Rauschenberg began taking pictures with a medium format twin-lens Rolliecord camera and continued to use it until it was lost sometime in the 1960s. The square format of his early explorations with photography is particularly relevant to the square form of *Capitol*.

44 Branden W. Joseph, "The Gap and the Frame," *October* 117 (Summer 2006), p. 66.

45 Rosalind Krauss, "Perpetual Inventory," in Walter Hopps and Susan Davidson, eds., *Robert Rauschenberg: A Retrospective*, exh. cat. (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1997), pp. 209–10.

46 Rauschenberg quoted in Sayag, "Interview with Robert Rauschenberg," unpaginated.

47 John Cage quoted in the film *Robert Rauschenberg: Retrospective* (Michael Blackwood, dir., 1979). Rauschenberg quoted in Tomkins, *Off the Wall*, p. 87.

48 "My hope is that ROCI can make the 'seeing' look and by looking and seeing at one time, bring peace into our vision." Robert Rauschenberg, "Robert Rauschenberg's handwritten draft of his speech given at the United Nations, announcing the Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange (ROCI) project," December 1984. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives.