

Robert Rauschenberg Foundation  
Hunter College MA in Art History

# *Urban / Interior Network / ROCI VENEZUELA (1985)*

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fig. 1

Robert Rauschenberg, *Urban / Interior Network / ROCI VENEZUELA*, 1985. Silkscreen ink, acrylic, and fabric on plywood with objects. 67 × 98 ¾ × 17 inches (170.2 × 250.8 × 43.2 cm). National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

## *Urban / Interior Network / ROCI VENEZUELA (1985)*

"Art has no borders[.] Specialization leads to cultural sterilization. An artist is a diplomat, a prophet, a historian, and a calendar of nourishment of morality and energy,"<sup>1</sup> Robert Rauschenberg once wrote. According to him, the expanded role of the artist in the postwar period related to a multimedia approach to making art, eschewing "specialization" in one medium in favor of a nonhierarchical approach to material. The Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange (ROCI)—the artist's most outwardly diplomatic project—became the perfect testing ground for a visual economy based on an egalitarian relationship between mediums (sculpture, painting, and photography), lending itself to a borderless art. This paper will critically examine *Urban / Interior Network / ROCI VENEZUELA* (1985) through Rauschenberg's ideal of "no borders," weighing its formal applications against the backdrop of neocolonial interests in the Global South and the monitoring of U.S. interests abroad.<sup>2</sup>

Pitched as a five-year-long odyssey for peace, ROCI constituted an art world tour of epic proportions that spanned eleven countries.<sup>3</sup> Rauschenberg's stated aim for ROCI was to reach what he called "sensitive areas": countries whose economic and political conditions stood in contrast to those of the United States.<sup>4</sup> Rauschenberg hoped to target countries governed by authoritarian regimes, whose restrictions on state media and artistic experimentation resulted in limited public knowledge of American art. His cultural antidote to political suppression and stark divides along the Iron Curtain was a "multi-media aggressive art attack," substituting militarized forces with artistic channels of exchange.<sup>5</sup>

While the ROCI enterprise was unique in its ambition and scale, the resulting works were not a far departure from Rauschenberg's preestablished working methods. Following an initial scouting and vetting process initiated by Rauschenberg's colleague Donald Saff, Rauschenberg arrived in each of the eleven countries for a brief, jam-packed tour, often hosted by elite local contacts. Rauschenberg and his team documented each site by filling rolls of film with images of monuments, architecture, daily life, and collecting objects from local craftsmen, indigenous makers, markets, and the street. The artist then shuttled this source material back to his studio in Captiva, Florida, assembled a series of paintings and sculptures, and returned the works for

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### HOW TO CITE THIS ESSAY

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an exhibition in the country's capital. The materials and techniques Rauschenberg employed throughout ROCI draw from his earlier repertoire, including swaths of collaged fabric, silk-screened photography in ink and acrylic, gestural mark-making, and assembled found objects.

The hasty politics of ROCI, the project's mixed reception by local audiences, and its occurrence during what is still a largely ignored epoch in Rauschenberg's career are all explanations for the relatively limited extant literature on the project. The artist's fervent hopes for ROCI may not have completely materialized, yet the works raise numerous valuable questions related to the trajectory of Rauschenberg's career and the problematic genealogy of the artist-as-ethnographer in contemporary art.<sup>6</sup>

For the third stop on his ROCI tour, Rauschenberg traveled to Venezuela from June 21 to July 3, 1985. Described by Saff as "South America's oldest, albeit youthful, democracy," Venezuela demonstrated relative political stability during the late postwar period, which was unlike most other ROCI sites.<sup>7</sup> At the invitation of Sofía Ímber, founding director of the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Caracas (MACC), and her husband Carlos Rangel, *ROCI VENEZUELA* was hosted by MACC from September 12 to October 27, 1985. The exhibition was a major installation that spread throughout three levels of gallery space in the museum's newly renovated five-story building.<sup>8</sup> Rauschenberg would recall that MACC was the only venue on his tour that did not require white gallery paint for the exhibition, a testament to the country's embeddedness in the international contemporary art world.<sup>9</sup> Intending to create a link between the U.S. public and the course of ROCI, Rauschenberg announced that the National Gallery of Art (NGA) in Washington, D.C. would exhibit one work from *ROCI VENEZUELA* while the exhibition was on view in Caracas.<sup>10</sup> In late October 1985, Rauschenberg gifted the painting *Urban / Interior Network* to the NGA with a reception and public unveiling to mark the event.<sup>11</sup>

*Urban / Interior Network* cobbles together Venezuela's diverse geography into an interlocking network of patterned fabrics, found objects, gestural paint, and photographic montage (fig. 1). The assembled images and materials correspond to Rauschenberg's two-week itinerary and together form a kind of travelogue, joining objects that Rauschenberg purchased from local markets with photographs he took in various parts of the country: the capital city of Caracas, the seaside city Puerto Cabello, multiple tribal missions across the Amazon forest, the gold-dredging district of Icabarú, and a marketplace in Maracaibo.<sup>12</sup> The result is the borderless pictorial language of multimedia assemblage that Rauschenberg transposed onto a collaborative working model, one intended to foster cultural interchange through appropriated materials and photography. Accordingly, *Urban / Interior Network* establishes its borderless system on multiple planes: through the work's hybrid existence as painting, sculpture, and photographic montage; through a seamy assemblage of photographs and objects taken from far-flung areas of Venezuela; and through the presentation of the work to a U.S. audience at the NGA.

Made in 1985, *Urban / Interior Network* bears the mark of Rauschenberg's development as an artist at mid-century, working in the shadow of Abstract Expressionism, while forging a raw approach to material and assemblage.<sup>13</sup> The work draws on certain techniques that Rauschenberg developed in his earlier Combine paintings, as summarized by art historian Branden W. Joseph, who stitched together the canonical discussion about Rauschenberg's

painting to argue that the breakdown of the border between “art” and “life” occurs in the art’s indeterminacy between two and three dimensions.<sup>14</sup> Joseph builds his argument on artist Allan Kaprow’s assessment in the 1950s that there was no longer a discriminatory hierarchy between material (“objects of every sort are available for the new art”), an assessment Kaprow later developed to include a breakdown between artistic fields (“the lines dividing the arts are rapidly falling out of place”).<sup>15</sup> For Joseph, Rauschenberg’s lack of borders has to do with his work’s unfixed relationship to space and dimension: Rauschenberg’s early Combine paintings “move out into the room” just as much as they sculpturally fold back into themselves as “cabinet forms.”<sup>16</sup>

While seemingly an obvious point—the move from painting to sculpture occurs between two and three dimensions—Joseph’s observation further allows for a fuller examination of various media in Rauschenberg’s work and how he uses them to manipulate both planes and frames. Indeed, Rauschenberg’s multimedia approach to material generated opportunities for crossover between pictorial languages, where photographs could be described as painterly and vice versa.<sup>17</sup> At Black Mountain College in North Carolina, Rauschenberg studied with the photographer Aaron Siskind, who curator Thomas B. Hess describes as the first photographer to discover “the picture plane.”<sup>18</sup> Locating Rauschenberg’s compositional strategy of bringing a vertical element into the center of a photographic image, Joseph discerned how Rauschenberg’s photographs dissolve the weight of their frames and open into “an implied continuity.”<sup>19</sup> It is at the frame, or border, therefore, that photography could unfurl into painting and painting

into the third dimension of sculpture.

Significantly, for Joseph, it is the malleability of Rauschenberg’s frames that lends his work an “overall feel” that is “not one of mastery and domination,” language that evokes the nonhierarchical ideals cited in Rauschenberg’s hopes for ROCI.<sup>20</sup>

Looking at *Urban / Interior Network*, the painting weaves between dimensions through sculptural found objects, gestural mark-making, and photographic montage. Like a photographic double exposure, the materials intersect, overlap, and obscure one another, while retaining separate legibility. The painting is organized into three vibrantly colored parallel columns in shades of red, pink, yellow, green, and blue bridged together by the horizontal stripes of a polychromatic printed fabric. Silkscreened photography folds within the painting, as the edges of each transferred image dissolve into the surrounding



fig. 2

Robert Rauschenberg,  
*Pilgrim*, 1960. Combine:  
oil, graphite, paper, printed  
paper, and fabric on canvas  
with painted wood chair.  
79 ¼ × 53 ⅞ × 18 ⅝ inches  
(201.3 × 136.8 × 47.3 cm).  
Private collection





materials. Considering the photograph of the bed on the lower center of the panel, the image generates visual ambiguity between architectural space and illustrative surface. The silkscreen reference image reveals the bed as an illustrated wall mural in Caracas, underlining the plane of the image through the texture of chipped paint and rough wall surface (figs. 2 and 3). Within the context of *Urban / Interior Network*, the photographic transfer over a striped piece of fabric adds a symbolic dimension to the supporting fabric's operational value as linen or textile, alluding to the vertical structure of earlier canonical works, including *Bed* (1955). The chair affixed to the left side of *Urban / Interior Network* draws from Rauschenberg's trademark archival lexicon, referencing classic works such as *Pilgrim* (1960; fig. 4), where the abrupt addition of a vertical sculptural element interrupts the frame and pulls the work to the floor. Through the manipulation of frames and pictorial edges, *Urban / Interior Network* weaves between two and three dimensions, and between painting, photography, and sculpture.

How, though, does Rauschenberg's dissolution of the frame across two and three dimensions conjoin with a geographic or diplomatic traversing of borders? Beyond larger conversations related to Rauschenberg as a cultural arm of U.S. diplomacy (especially related to his winning the international prize in painting at the 1964 Venice Biennale) or his love of travel, scholars such as Joshua Shannon and James Boaden have related the artist's assembled paintings to both economically developed and dispossessed geographies, namely and respectively mid-century New York City and the depression-era U.S. rural South.<sup>21</sup> These arguments tend to focus on the source material used in Rauschenberg's paintings, whether the refuse of urban development or fabrics and textures evoking rural poor areas. From a broader pictorial perspective, Shannon's attention to a perceptible "urban seaminess" in the artist's work draws these geographies together in that the sordid urban seam could relate equally to the seam of a hem or garment.<sup>22</sup> Substituting the border or framing edge with the polyvalent "seam," Rauschenberg's paintings are patched together in ways that evade pictorial unity, while generating rich paths for the eyes to travel across the work.

fig. 4  
Robert Rauschenberg,  
*Urban / Interior Network /*  
*ROCI VENEZUELA*, 1985  
(detail)

fig. 4  
Silkscreen reference image,  
Venezuela, 1985. Photo:  
Robert Rauschenberg.  
Robert Rauschenberg  
Foundation Archives,  
New York



*Urban / Interior Network* incorporates Rauschenberg's affinity for cloth and sewing through vertical columns of collaged and silkscreened reproductions of vibrant, patterned fabrics. While there is no conclusive evidence as to where Rauschenberg purchased the fabrics in the present work, video footage and contact sheets from the artist's travels display a series of printed textiles, waving over a storefront, possibly in Caracas, and notably next to a Venezuelan flag (figs. 5 and 6). The fabric and tripartite composition along with the overall color palette of *Urban / Interior Network* loosely echoes the nation's flag so that the assembling of photographs from remote territories might be taken to model an integrated nationhood.<sup>23</sup>

While idealistic on the surface, economic and geographic integration across Venezuela in the mid- to late twentieth century was in fact a key neoliberal strategy often spurred on by neo-colonial interests from the United States, who sought to reap benefits from the nation's oil economy. Comprising portions of Caribbean coastline, Andean foothills, and Amazon forest, Venezuela's geographically diverse interior mapped out a complex network of economic disparities, as well as cultural and social multiplicities.<sup>24</sup> While enjoying amenities built up during Caracas's prosperous period of the 1970s—a Hilton Hotel and the MACC—Rauschenberg's enthusiasm for marginal urban and rural areas drew him to places of peripheral poverty. Taken together, *Urban / Interior Network* collapses these widespread areas into compact, assembled objects.

Located in Parque Central, a huge commercial and residential complex developed in the 1970s and propelled by the country's oil revenues, MACC participated in the city's efforts toward urban integration and renewal. In a 1985 issue of UNESCO's *Museum* journal, a representative from MACC wrote of the museum's strategic location:

Far from being . . . an isolated and remote precinct jealously segregated from residential areas. . . . The Parque Central is situated in an intermediate area, at the point of intersection and convergence of the working-class and middle-class districts. The CMCA [MACC] has thus succeeded in integrating itself physically and operating effectively at all socio-economic levels in the life of the city of Caracas.<sup>25</sup>

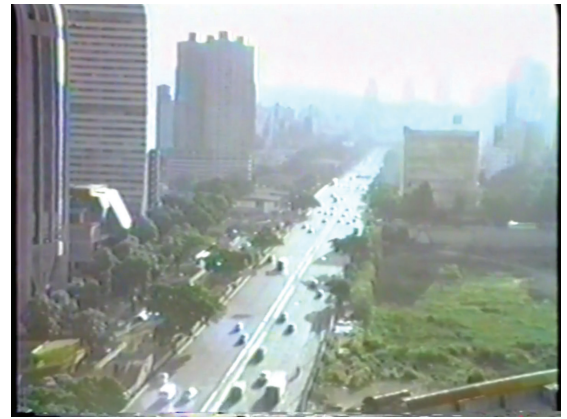
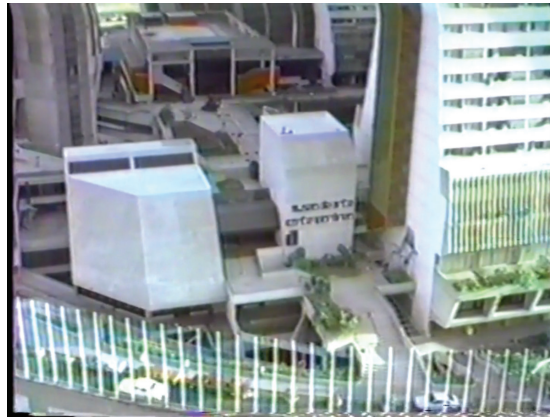
fig. 5

Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange, Venezuela travelogue video, 1985 (still). Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York

fig. 6

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





While true that MACC is adjacent to the working-class area of San Agustín del Sur, the hope that Parque Central and MACC would serve as a point of transit between working- and middle-class neighborhoods never materialized.<sup>26</sup> On the contrary, Parque Central and MACC were isolated between two parallel highways, the Avenida Bolívar and the Avenida Lecuna, both running across the east–west axis of the city.<sup>27</sup>

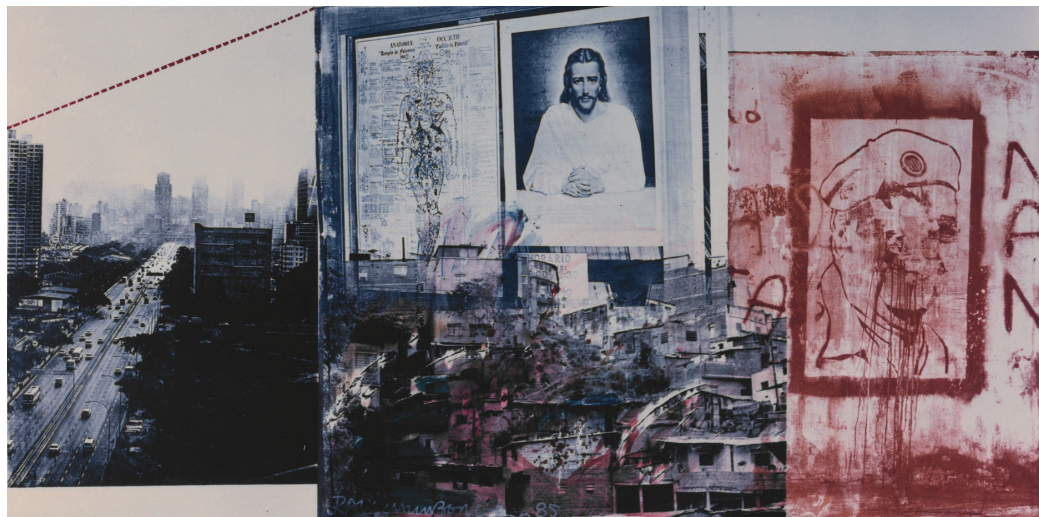
Raw video footage taken during Rauschenberg's travels in 1985 captures MACC's proximity to the Avenida Bolívar, as the camera pans from an aerial view of the museum to the tower-lined highway that blocks the museum from pedestrian walkways (figs. 7 and 8). The same aerial frame of the Avenida Bolívar appears in a different work from the same series, *Urban Order / ROCI VENEZUELA* (1985; fig. 9), which was gifted to MACC during the exhibition in Caracas.<sup>28</sup> Next to the image of the Avenida Bolívar within *Urban Order* stands a photograph of closely packed houses built-up on a hillside, characteristic of the shantytowns around Caracas.

figs. 7–8

Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange, Venezuela travelogue video, 1985 (stills). Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York

fig. 9

Robert Rauschenberg, *Urban Order / ROCI VENEZUELA*, 1985. Silkscreen ink and acrylic on plywood. 49 1/2 × 98 5/8 inches (125.7 × 250.5 cm). Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Caracas



The juxtaposition of highway and urban slum makes visible the fact that the government's future-looking urban planning more often presented "a false facade of well-being" than it effectively addressed the widespread poverty within Venezuela.<sup>29</sup> The unfulfilled promise of Parque Central was poignantly felt in 1985, the year of Rauschenberg's exhibition and two years after "Black Friday," when a crash in oil prices resulted in the collapse of the Venezuelan bolívar in relation to the U.S. dollar.<sup>30</sup>

Linked through their "urban" titles, both *Urban Order* and *Urban / Interior Network* address the economic realities of modernization driven by oil money. A silkscreen transfer of an oil rig appears in the lower right corner of *Urban / Interior Network* and multiple times in *Power Stack / ROCI VENEZUELA* (1985). Rauschenberg's interest in the relationship between automotive transportation and the oil industry long precedes the *ROCI VENEZUELA* series and would continue to reappear in his later works. The beginning of his *Glut* series (1986–89/1991–94), for example, is nearly contemporaneous with *ROCI VENEZUELA*. Inspired by a 1985 trip to Houston and his hometown of Port Arthur, Texas, the *Gluts* are made of discarded service signs—the refuse of the Gulf Coast's economic crisis, spurred on by the very same market crash experienced in Venezuela.<sup>31</sup> One could speculate that Rauschenberg's gift of *Urban / Interior Network* to the NGA implicates both Venezuela and the United States in the economic fallout of the oil industry. The United States had significant economic and political interests in Venezuela and exerted far-reaching influence on the country's economic development throughout the twentieth century. Beyond the failed planning within Caracas, Rauschenberg also witnessed the uneven effects of urbanization in the Amazon region.

Rauschenberg spent four days in the Amazon, visiting various indigenous tribes, the likenesses of whom appear in *Urban / Interior Network* and *My Panare Dream with Yutaje / ROCI VENEZUELA* (1985). The Amazon territory was a difficult area to reach due to underdeveloped transportation infrastructure and expensive bureaucratic obstacles. In an interview with Saff, Rauschenberg recalls the uncomfortable and dangerous aspects of traveling into the Amazon forest: "We had this pilot, a treehopper, I think they're called, and probably our

travel was illegal. . . . The pilot had a kind of Jungle Jim attitude. No risk was too great, which didn't make the flight that comfortable."<sup>32</sup> Venezuela's rough terrain is equally evidenced in the silkscreen image of a wooden bridge applied behind the chair on the left side of *Urban / Interior Network*. The bridge reappears in the trip's travelogue video footage, as a Toyota jeep careens across its wooden slats, driving through the forest near the mining town of Icabarú (fig. 10)



fig. 10

Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange, Venezuela travelogue video, 1985 (still). Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York





Rauschenberg translated the photograph into a screenprint on *Urban / Interior Network*, enlarging and cropping the image, so that the bridge supplies texture and pattern to the lower left of the panel.

Venezuela in the 1970s experienced greater awareness of rural indigenous populations, as the nation's government commissioned a series of development projects in the southern parts of the country to mitigate pressure on urban centers.<sup>33</sup> American urban planners from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University served as consultants in the country's most ambitious regional development schemes, laying roads and building up industrial new towns, such as Ciudad Guayana.<sup>34</sup> Economic incentives for urban expansion belied the Venezuelan government's interest in integrating indigenous populations into a national framework, as the gradual urbanization of rural areas proved profoundly disruptive to indigenous life. Rauschenberg was aware, to some extent, of the inequitable

frameworks of urban development and integration, as he commented on both the dismissive attitude of urban elites to the Amazon and the corrosive impact Christian missionaries had on indigenous culture.<sup>35</sup>

In an interview with Saff, Rauschenberg clumsily describes the garment choices of indigenous people in Venezuela as an indicator of the preservation of their cultural heritage: "We visited Indians who had been taken over by liberal Baptist missionaries, who permitted them to keep their native dress, something less than conventional. I mean the women were still going braless and the men had loincloths and dyed their skin the same color as their loincloths."<sup>36</sup> While Rauschenberg conversationally communicates a concern for indigenous cultural sovereignty, the *ROCI VENEZUELA* works grapple with the issue of how to visualize unincorporated, exploited peoples into paintings intended to reflect the mirror image of a nation-state.

The photograph of three indigenous Panare people transferred onto *Urban / Interior Network* is almost claustrophobic: nothing is visible beyond the three Panare people outside of the stark white wall of the mission (fig. 11). Within the painting, however, the silkscreen transfer of this photograph dissolves the confining mission wall into the complex network of the painting's overlapping imagery, which, as mentioned before, loosely forms a Venezuelan flag. Subsumed in a swath of red paint, the bodies of the three Panare people are turned away from the classical entablature on the right side of the panel yet share the same pictorial space. The painting might serve as a reminder to urban elites that, in Rauschenberg's words, the Amazon territory

fig. 11

Silkscreen reference image, Venezuela, 1985. Photo: Robert Rauschenberg. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York

"must have something to do with the country because they occupied eighty percent of it."<sup>37</sup> While the painting might visually dissolve the walls or geographic borders that separate urban center from rural periphery, arguably, it does not resolve the geopolitical tension of the imagined encounter nor the more fraught reality of integration.

Rauschenberg's works in *ROCI VENEZUELA* highlight the tension between centers and peripheries just as much as they trace the problematic roadways that aspired to bridge these areas together. While delineating the disparate regions within Venezuela, Rauschenberg also pointed to moments of intersection or encounter, speaking to what literary critic Hugo Achugar calls a "heterogeneity of scenarios" between perceived binaries within Venezuela: city/countryside, Western/indigenous, and cosmopolitan/provincial. Another photograph of young indigenous Panare people is overlaid against a graphic illustration of an Amazon forest animal, either a peccary or a tapir, also seen in *Guarded Mirror Rivers / ROCI VENEZUELA* (1985).<sup>38</sup> While the source image of the drawing has not been identified, as a symbol it is related to the cult of María Lionza, a goddess whose persona draws from a composite tradition, bringing together aspects of West African, Catholic, and Amerindian beliefs. Her likeness, often depicted as an indigenous woman riding a tapir, infiltrates multiple strata of Venezuelan folk arts and public monuments, situating a connectedness between urban folk tradition and the Amazon forests.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, the painted wooden mirror on the upper left of the panel points to artisanal art practices in wood carving and painting (a technique often used in religious folk imagery as well), which, while regional, do not fit neatly into any category.

At best, *Urban / Interior Network* could be understood as a presentation of Venezuela's "heterogeneity of scenarios" to a U.S. audience at the NGA, but it remains an open question as to whether Rauschenberg's borderless pictorial language is fully equipped to resolve the issues raised by the material he uses. *ROCI VENEZUELA* was no departure from Rauschenberg's openly critical stance on the oil industry, especially in relation to its vast environmental toll, but the broad ideal of "art without borders" generates tension—possibly intentional—with the area's complex history of neocolonialism imposed both from within and without its borders.

#### ENDNOTES

- 1 Robert Rauschenberg, handwritten statement, Robert Rauschenberg papers, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives. This quotation is referenced in Hiroko Ikegami, "'Art Has No Borders': Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange," in Leah Dickerman and Achim Borchard-Hume, eds., *Robert Rauschenberg*, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2016), p. 342.
- 2 Rauschenberg, handwritten statement.
- 3 For larger discussions of the project, see Ikegami, "'Art Has No Borders'" and Christin J. Mamiya, "We the People: The Art of Robert Rauschenberg and the Construction of National Identity," *American Art* (Summer 1993), pp. 56–62.
- 4 Donald Saff discusses Rauschenberg's aims in conversation with the artist in "A Conversation about Art and ROCI: Robert Rauschenberg and Donald Saff," *ROCI: Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange* (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art and Prestel, 1991), pp. 155–79, and in *The Reminiscences of Donald Saff*, 2013. *Robert Rauschenberg Oral History Project*. Conducted in collaboration with INCITE/Columbia Center for Oral History Research. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives.

- 5 Robert Rauschenberg's handwritten draft of a statement about Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange (ROCI), 1982. Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives.
- 6 Hal Foster's essay "The Artist as Ethnographer" identified ethnographic trends in art wherein contemporary artists take on the role of participant-observer, staging research and field work around post-colonial and subaltern communities. See Hal Foster, "The Artist as Ethnographer," *The Return of the Real* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996).
- 7 Vitoria Habda argues that Rauschenberg and Donald Saff scouted Venezuela for its democratic status, compensating for Rauschenberg's visit to Chile during the most brutal period of Augusto Pinochet's military dictatorship. Her thesis chapter is also the most comprehensive discussion to date of the *ROCI VENEZUELA* series. See Vitoria Habda, "Yankee Go Home: ROCI in Latin America" (master's thesis, Hunter College, The City University of New York, 2021).
- 8 For visual documentation of the exhibition in Caracas, see *Rauschenberg: Museo de Arte Contemporaneo de Caracas*, exh. cat. (Caracas: Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Caracas and Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange, 1985).
- 9 Rauschenberg, "A Conversation about Art and ROCI," p. 169.
- 10 "Rauschenberg's R.O.C.I. Opens in Venezuela," press release (Washington, D.C.: Gray and Company Public Communications International, September 8, 1985). Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives.
- 11 Information supplied by email exchange with Helen Hsu, May 18–19, 2021, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation.
- 12 I have identified the source images in *Urban / Interior Network* by using the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation's archival contact sheets for *ROCI VENEZUELA*, alongside Terry Van Brunt's travel diary.
- 13 My understanding of Rauschenberg's early paintings is largely based on Joshua Shannon, *The Disappearance of Objects: New York Art and the Rise of the Postmodern City* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2009).
- 14 Branden W. Joseph, "The Gap and the Frame," *October*, no. 117 (Summer 2006), pp. 44–70.
- 15 Allan Kaprow quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 48–49. Original references: Allan Kaprow, "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock" (1958), in *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, ed. Jeff Kelley (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 7–8; Allan Kaprow, "Experimental Art" (1966), in *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, p. 73.
- 16 Joseph, "The Gap and the Frame," p. 50.
- 17 At times Rauschenberg described his photographs as raw material, and the process of taking them similar to building a palette. "Knowing about our Paris show I wanted to have as full a palette of choices to select works from for the exhibition as possible, so I spent nearly a month traveling from Long Island to Captiva Island." Alain Sayag, "Interview with Robert Rauschenberg," *Robert Rauschenberg: Photographs* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), p. 5.
- 18 Thomas B. Hess quoted in Joseph, "The Gap and the Frame," p. 59. Original reference: Thomas B. Hess, "Aesthetic in Camera," in *Aaron Siskind: Photographer* (Rochester, NY: George Eastman House, 1965), p. 12. See also Elaine de Kooning, "The Photographs of Aaron Siskind" (1951), in *Aaron Siskind: Toward a Personal Vision, 1935–1955*, ed. Deborah Martin Kao and Charles A. Mayer (Boston: Boston College Museum of Art, 1994), pp. 51–53.
- 19 Joseph, "The Gap and the Frame," p. 63.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 62.
- 21 For a comprehensive discussion of Rauschenberg's politics as an American artist, see Hiroko Ikegami, *The Great Migrator: Robert Rauschenberg and the Global Rise of American Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2010). For discussions of Rauschenberg's painting in relation to disparate U.S. geographies, see Joshua Shannon, *Disappearance of Objects* and James Boaden, "Black Painting (with Asheville Citizens)," *Art History* 34, 1 (February 2011), pp. 166–91.



- 22 Irving Sandler quoted in Shannon, *Disappearance of Objects*, p. 99.
- 23 Vitoria Habda also observes the work's flaglike composition in "Yankee Go Home," pp. 77–78.
- 24 Rauschenberg described Venezuela as the "richest inspirational country" for ROCI due to the contrast between each of the areas he visited in "ROCI: VENEZUELA Travelogue," Audiovisual Collection, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, New York. Diverse terrain was known to be a contributing factor in the country's uneven economic development. Hugo Achugar speaks about the uneven economic development within Venezuela in "Latin American Modernities," *Alfredo Boulton and His Contemporaries: Critical Dialogues in Venezuelan Art, 1912–1974* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2008), p. 15.
- 25 José Maria Salvador, "The Caracas Museum of Contemporary Art," *Museum* 37, no. 145 (1985), p. 42.
- 26 Vicente Lecuna, "Modern Dreams, Uncanny Spaces," *Downward Spiral: El Helicoide's Descent from Mall to Prison*, ed. Celeste Olalquiaga and Lisa Blakemore (New York: Terreform, 2018), pp. 174–83.
- 27 *Ibid.*, p. 178.
- 28 Rauschenberg was photographed shaking hands with President Jaime Lusinchi in front of *Urban Order / ROCI VENEZUELA* in *El Universal* (Caracas) (Sept. 14, 1996), p. 1. The work also appears in Anne-Louise Volkenborn, "Rauschenberg Style Influencing Local Artists," *Daily Journal* (Caracas) (Oct. 27, 1985), pp. 1–2.
- 29 Tahía Rivero, "Contesting Modernity," *Contesting Modernity: Informalism in Venezuela, 1955–1975* (Houston: Museum of Fine Arts Houston, 2018), p. 12.
- 30 Lecuna, "Modern Dreams, Uncanny Spaces," p. 176.
- 31 Susan Davidson, "Ideas Have Elbows," *Robert Rauschenberg: Gluts* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 2009), p. 30.
- 32 Rauschenberg, "A Conversation about Art and ROCI," p. 169.
- 33 Email exchange facilitated by Antonella Pelizari between the author and Sagrario Berti. Vitoria Habda also discusses the expansion of transportation networks into the Amazon territory in "Yankee Go Home," p. 71.
- 34 Simone Rots and Ana Maria Fernandez-Maldonado, "Planning Ciudad Guayana: An Industrial New Town in Venezuela," *International Planning Studies* 24 (2019), pp. 353–68. See also Tracy Neumann, "U.S. Foundations, Urban Design, and International Development since 1945," Rockefeller Archive Center (2017), pp. 1–11.
- 35 Rauschenberg, "A Conversation about Art and ROCI," pp. 168–69.
- 36 *Ibid.*, p. 168.
- 37 *Ibid.*
- 38 Achugar, "Latin American Modernities," p. 15.
- 39 Rauschenberg more explicitly engages with the urban folk religion in his work *Saints Anonymous / ROCI VENEZUELA* (1985).