

# The New York Times

## Review/Art; Robert Rauschenberg, At Home and Abroad

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There has never been any doubt that Robert Rauschenberg, one of the paragons of postwar American art, is an extremely prolific artist. Ever since he burst upon the New York art scene in the late 1950's -- helping to set the stage for Pop, Minimalism and a few other art movements -- he has been relentlessly, at times frantically productive. Forget the artist's often-quoted desire to "operate in the gap between art and life." It has sometimes seemed that Mr. Rauschenberg might actually close that gap, simply by filling it with the prints, drawings, paintings, sculpture, photographs and dance sets of his own making.

Ready evidence of Mr. Rauschenberg's nonstop creativity is available here in two full-scale exhibitions of his work. At the Corcoran Gallery of Art is a moving, frequently revelatory show of 100 works that the artist made in the early 1950's, before fame and fortune struck. It has been organized by Walter Hopps under the auspices of the Menil Collection in Houston, and many of its paintings, collages, assemblage sculptures and photographs have only recently been rediscovered. They confirm the artist's early inventiveness and prescience, shedding further light on, among other things, the fascinating subject of his influence on Jasper Johns.

Meanwhile, ensconced at the National Gallery is the "Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange," better known as ROCI (pronounced "Rocky"). This carnival-like extravaganza consists of more than 125 works, from big, bright, sometimes gaudy paintings and sculptures to photographs and videotapes. All are the products of an around-the-world art-making spree that preoccupied the artist during most of the 1980's.

The contrast between old and new work has tended to elicit a "loved then, hated now" reaction among critics. This has perhaps been influenced by the prevalent view that Mr. Rauschenberg's recent efforts fall far short of his early achievements and also by the unusual nature of the ROCI venture.