

***Robert Rauschenberg at Gemini G.E.L.:
Celebrating Four Decades of Innovation and Collaboration***

Gemini G.E.L. Presents Exhibition of Forty Years of Artistic Collaboration with
Robert Rauschenberg, Celebrating the Centennial of His Birth

The works presented in this celebration feel like a journey—not just through the artist’s four decades at Gemini G.E.L., but through the restless, searching spirit that defined him. From the moment he stepped into Gemini in 1967, Rauschenberg seemed to expand the very idea of what printmaking could hold—folding in the unexpected, the ordinary, the cosmic, and the deeply personal. This exhibition is as much about his vision as it is about the alchemy of collaboration: the way paper, ink, fabric, light, and found matter can become something alive, something that still speaks to us decades later and inspires a new generation of artists exploring hybridity, environmental concerns and political engagement.

Booster and 7 Studies (1967)

Robert Rauschenberg arrived at Gemini in February 1967 to begin his first collaboration with the nascent publisher, creating *Booster and 7 Studies*. He told Gemini’s co-founders, Sidney Felsen and Stanley Grinstein, that he wanted to create “a self-portrait of inner man,” which would require an X-ray of his entire body. Doing it in one complete scan wasn’t possible in Los Angeles and would have required Rauschenberg to return to the east coast, so he elected to be X-rayed in six sections. Rauschenberg’s body floats over a celestial chart tracking stars and planets, surrounded by magazine clippings and mechanical imagery, including power drills and a rocket launch pad. Throughout his career, Rauschenberg adapted to the constraints of locale, techniques, and materials, and *Booster*, with its partitioned imagery, is the earliest evidence at Gemini of the extraordinary results created by that adaptability. The scale of *Booster* resulted in perhaps the largest lithograph printed at that time.

Reels (B + C) (1968)

Created in 1968, *Reels (B + C)* is a series of six color lithographs inspired by the movie *Bonnie & Clyde*, featuring Warren Beatty and Faye Dunaway. Rauschenberg already had connections in the film industry, and Beatty provided him with stills that he used as collage elements in the prints. These works blend cinematic drama with painterly abstraction, turning the reel of film into the immediacy of paper.

Stoned Moon Series (1969-70)

Inspired by his attendance at the Apollo 11 launch, Rauschenberg’s *Stoned Moon* series merges the ethereal with the tangible, and *Sky Garden* is its luminous centerpiece—a burst of color and wonder. This series combines NASA photographs with images of the natural environment, birds, and poetic reflections. Rauschenberg integrated Florida’s swampy landscapes, rocket plumes, boot prints, and helmet reflections into visual elegies for space exploration. The 34 editions in the *Stoned Moon Series* were proofed over a two-month period in marathon sessions that often occurred round the clock, requiring infinite stamina on the part of both the artist and the printers.

Earth Day(1970)

Rauschenberg's work has always been deeply connected to the world around him, and Earth Day captures this urgency with striking clarity. The distressed bald eagle, poised amid polluted highways and dying forests, becomes a symbol of the fragile balance between nature and human industry — a call to reflection and responsibility that resonates today as powerfully as it did then.

Cardbird Series (1971)

Rauschenberg created one of his most poetic series using discarded cardboard brought to life through printmaking. The *Cardbirds* — named for their feather-like delicacy — reclaim humble, overlooked materials and transform them into intricate, tactile artworks. *Cardbirds* capture every crease, label, stain, and staple in vivid detail, turning cardboard away from its commercial purpose and into delicate, poetic objects that celebrate impermanence and change.

Horsefeathers Thirteen (1972)

In 1972, Rauschenberg made *Horsefeathers Thirteen*, a series of experimental prints that combine lithography, screenprinting, pochoir, embossing, and collage. Each print is one of a kind, showing repeated images—such as animals, gears, and clocks—along with magazine clippings and abstract shapes. The works explore perception, free association, and the interaction of natural and artificial forms, inviting endless interpretations through juxtaposition and variation.

Pages and Fuses (1973–74)

Created at a centuries-old paper mill in Ambert, France, Rauschenberg's *Pages and Fuses* are among the first projects that took him and the Gemini staff around the world. The *Pages* are nearly monochromatic sheets of handmade paper, serving as quiet and austere ritual objects, while the *Fuses* layer delicate photographic imagery and colored pulp into textured forms. Both are fragile, small-scale works that feel remarkably intimate, and together they showcase Rauschenberg's mastery of subtlety and material poetry.

Hoarfrost (1974)

The *Hoarfrost* series features offset-printed images that are solvent-transferred onto chiffon and satin. These delicate works include illustrations from newspapers and magazines, blurred into photomontages. The works hang from the wall by their top corners, and slight movements in the air can make a *Hoarfrost* shimmer. The textile prints float like vaporous poems, capturing the frost of frozen moments.

Bones and Unions (1975)

For his second project outside the Gemini workshop, Rauschenberg and members of the Felsen family and Gemini staff traveled to the Gandhi Ashram in Ahmedabad, India. For *Bones*, patterned fabrics and a framework of bamboo strips were laid into wooden molds filled with paper pulp, and a second layer of paper pulp was then poured over, pressed and dried. The six *Unions* are made of rag-mud, a mixture of paper pulp, fenugreek powder, ground tamarind seed, calk powder, gum powder, copper sulphate, and water. The rag-mud's strong aroma lasts long after the material has dried and is a distinctive feature of this series. Connected to the hand-shaped rag-mud forms are ropes, dyed strings and bamboo.

PUBLICONS (1978)

PUBLICONS marks a major shift in Rauschenberg's work—from his long-standing use of images to works which have no images whatsoever. This sculptural series of six wall-hanging lacquered wooden boxes unfolds like a ritual: closed, they are minimal and pristine; opened, they reveal a spectacle of color and light, created by strips of fabric and found objects. Their gleaming surfaces and mirrors channel the vibrant spectacle of the late 1970s disco era.

Rookery Mounds (1979)

In 1979, Rauschenberg rediscovered his love of taking photographs, and it completely transformed the visual appearance of his artworks from that date forward. Inspired by the surroundings of his Captiva Island home, much of the photographic imagery in *Rookery Mounds* dominates the page and, unlike earlier works, is relatively simple in layering. Wheels, tires, fabrics, water, plants, and other familiar Rauschenberg visual elements appear in these prints. The eleven lithographs are all printed on exquisite sheets of deckled-edged paper, custom-made for the project by Twinrocker. A key feature is that the imagery highlights and draws attention to the paper's striking decks.

American Pewter with Burroughs (1983)

Rauschenberg collaborated with William S. Burroughs on *American Pewter with Burroughs*, the series title subtly referencing both the writer's family legacy in computing and the technological themes woven throughout this series of six prints that combine metallic inks, text fragments, photo transfers, and pewter powder. Silver ink runs throughout all the works, giving the colors a subtle, refined quality. Burroughs sent a sheet of short phrases to the workshop, and Rauschenberg responded with a collage of images. Each print—characterized by juxtapositions, industrial motifs, and Burroughs' poetry—shifts between the archive and the dream, blending futuristic images with an inner narrative. Burroughs' words are embossed directly onto the prints, adding a tactile element to their layered surfaces.

7 Characters (1982)

In China, working with handmade Xuan paper and silk, Rauschenberg created the *7 Character* series. Arranging cut posters, fabrics, and ribbons into unique collages, each features one of seven Chinese characters—chosen for meaning and form—mounted in relief. A thin Xuan paper sheet sealed the surface, while a medallion, cut from silk wedding bed covers, is suspended at the bottom by a colorful ribbon. The medallion's reverse is reflected in a mirror on a silk-lined backing within a clear acrylic box frame. The collage edges are gilded with gold leaf, and traditional Chinese woodblock stamps mark the paper mill, artist, and publisher.

Sling-Shots Lit (1984)

Sling-Shots Lit is a series of eleven works, and one of the most technically challenging of Rauschenberg's collaborations with Gemini. Monumental in scale, they combine traditional printmaking media, like lithography and screenprinting on Mylar and sailcloth, with materials as diverse as a fluorescent light fixture and a movable window shade system. Each *Sling-Shots Lit* is filled with an energetic combination of Rauschenberg's photographs. Evoking nocturnal energy—flaring neon, fragmented motion, and kinetic leaps—they resemble visual fireworks, celebrating urban exuberance. Designed for interaction, the window shades can be pulled up or down, allowing for countless configurations

Tibetan Keys and Locks (1986)

Inspired by his travels to Tibet, *Tibetan Keys and Locks* are fabricated from welded steel. Photographs taken by the artist during his trip to Tibet were collaged and screenprinted onto adhesive-coated decal paper. The decals were applied to the surfaces, leaving open one area for hand-painting. Each work was signed by the artist in both English and Tibetan. The vivid, luminous images create a deliberate contrast with the austere simplicity of the geometric, white steel structures supporting them. Each piece layers silhouettes of locks, openings, Buddhist iconography, and abstracted architectural forms. Quiet and contemplative, they resonate like visual mantras.

Samarkand Stitches (1988)

This series was inspired by Rauschenberg's travels to Uzbekistan, and his interest in textiles led to *Samarkand Stitches*—unique fabric works featuring asymmetrical designs and assemblages. Ikat silk fabrics imported from Samarkand were sewn together with domestic fabrics printed with photographic images taken during his travels in the former Soviet Union. The random ink colors and diverse Ikat fabrics enhance the uniqueness of each textile piece. The works are backed with assemblages of domestic fabric. A powder-coated aluminum hanging rod runs through a fabric band at the top back, allowing each piece to be displayed suspended from the ceiling or mounted on a wall. Each piece bears an embroidered signature tag on the front and an embroidered Gemini identification tag on the back.

Borealis Shares (1990)

Robert Rauschenberg first saw the Northern Lights in 1989 on a flight to Sweden. That vast swath of colors flowing across the night sky inspired the title of his 1989-92 paintings on brass, copper and bronze, the *Borealis* Series. Gemini's *Borealis Shares* are Rauschenberg's direct invitation to the viewer to participate in art, a vision he held throughout his career. The two *Shares* are comprised of brass panels, each hand painted by Rauschenberg with acid patinas; interestingly, the abstract painting was applied prior to the screenprinted photo imagery, giving the artist tremendous freedom in his application of color without the influence of pre-existing imagery.

Speculations (1994)

Rauschenberg's *Speculations* is a screenprint series that layers photographic fragments, abstract shapes, gestural marks, and appropriated images. Reflecting his "combine" approach in two dimensions, the works encourage open-ended interpretations through visual juxtapositions. Exploring concepts like time, memory, media, and perception, *Speculations* exemplifies Rauschenberg's fascination with complexity, chance, and the act of seeing.

L.A. Uncovered (1998)

Rauschenberg's *L.A. Uncovered* depicts Los Angeles through his photographs, exploring overlooked neighborhoods with retired LAPD guides. The series layers rooftop textures, cracked pavement, graffiti, signage, and street markings into complex collages. Vivid colors, ethnic symbols, and urban details shift in scale and meaning, creating a kaleidoscopic visual tapestry that blurs the line between art and life while reflecting the city's complexity and spirit.

Marrikitch (2000)

In 2000, Rauschenberg created *Marrikitch*, a vibrant homage to Moroccan tilework, desert textures, calligraphic patterns, and night-sky motifs. Printed in overlapping layers, these works shimmer with glazed geometry and celestial echoes, weaving distant souks and endless horizons into layered abstraction and painterly memory.