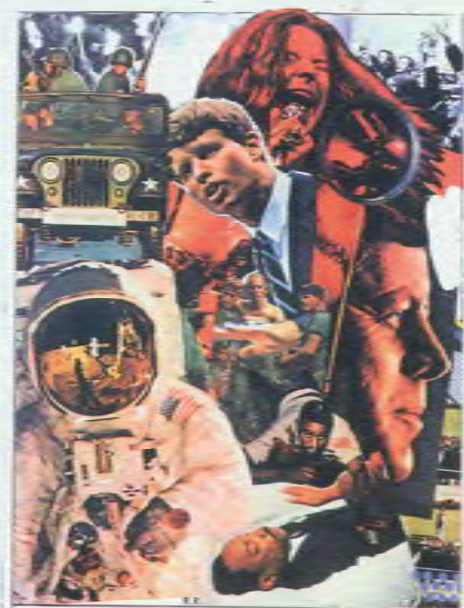


Robert Rauschenberg has been called "the man who turned contemporary art on its head." Born in 1925, briefly considering the ministry, and maturing in the 1950s, he rapidly became, and he remains, one of the most widely admired artists alive.

He gave the second half of the 20th century new ways to think about art and life. Indeed, his most famous statement is: "I try to act in that gap between [art & life]." Before Rauschenberg, most people thought of art and life as very different things. He made us re-think that assumption. Before Rauschenberg, painting and sculpture were two different things; he joined them in works he called "combines." He also developed innovative collage techniques which he used to make some of the most striking images of our time – images that connect us dynamically with life, death, and hope. At a time when "high art" was abstract, he brought daily life back into art. In the process, he encouraged what he calls "openmindedness."



Above: **Signs**, 1970
Silkscreened print, 43" x 34"



Above: **Exhibition Poster / ROCI Berlin**, 1990
Offset Lithograph, 38" x 24 3/4"

His early work of the 1950s was only the beginning of a lifetime of integrative thinking. He went on to make pioneering explorations in fields as diverse as print-making, poster-making, photography, theater design, performance art, electronic art, and radical forms of collaborative art. Along the way, he reminded the art world of the beauty that can be seen in ordinary realities, including objects and images usually discarded in a highly materialistic society where many see only what they are told to see.

During the 1940s and '50s, most major American artists were involved primarily with "self-expression." There was little engagement with socio-political problems outside the small world of studios, galleries and museums. Rauschenberg thought differently, and has been socially conscious all of his career. At the highest level of integrative thinking is Rauschenberg's vision of the organic connection between "self" and "other," between every individual and humanity as a whole.



Above: **Exhibition Poster / ROCI Chile**, 1985
Offset Lithograph, 34 1/2" x 24"

He has said: "...artists must be engaged in determining the fate of the earth..." and "...now it's up to the artists to wage peace." He does not simply talk the talk; he walks the walk. He ate with Martin Luther King, Jr. and read King's words in public. He made fundraising prints for President Carter. His Change, Inc. foundation provides housing and studio space for impoverished artists.

The general public became aware of his work in an issue of LIFE Magazine in 1965 featuring a portfolio of images illuminating Dante's DIVINE COMEDY. He has stayed in touch with popular media doing covers for TIME Magazine in 1976, in celebration of the 200th birthday of the United States, and again in 2002, on the first anniversary of the tragedy of September 11th, 2001. His contemporary sensibility has always been close to the pulse of the nation. In the late '60s, NASA asked him to document the space program. One of the many

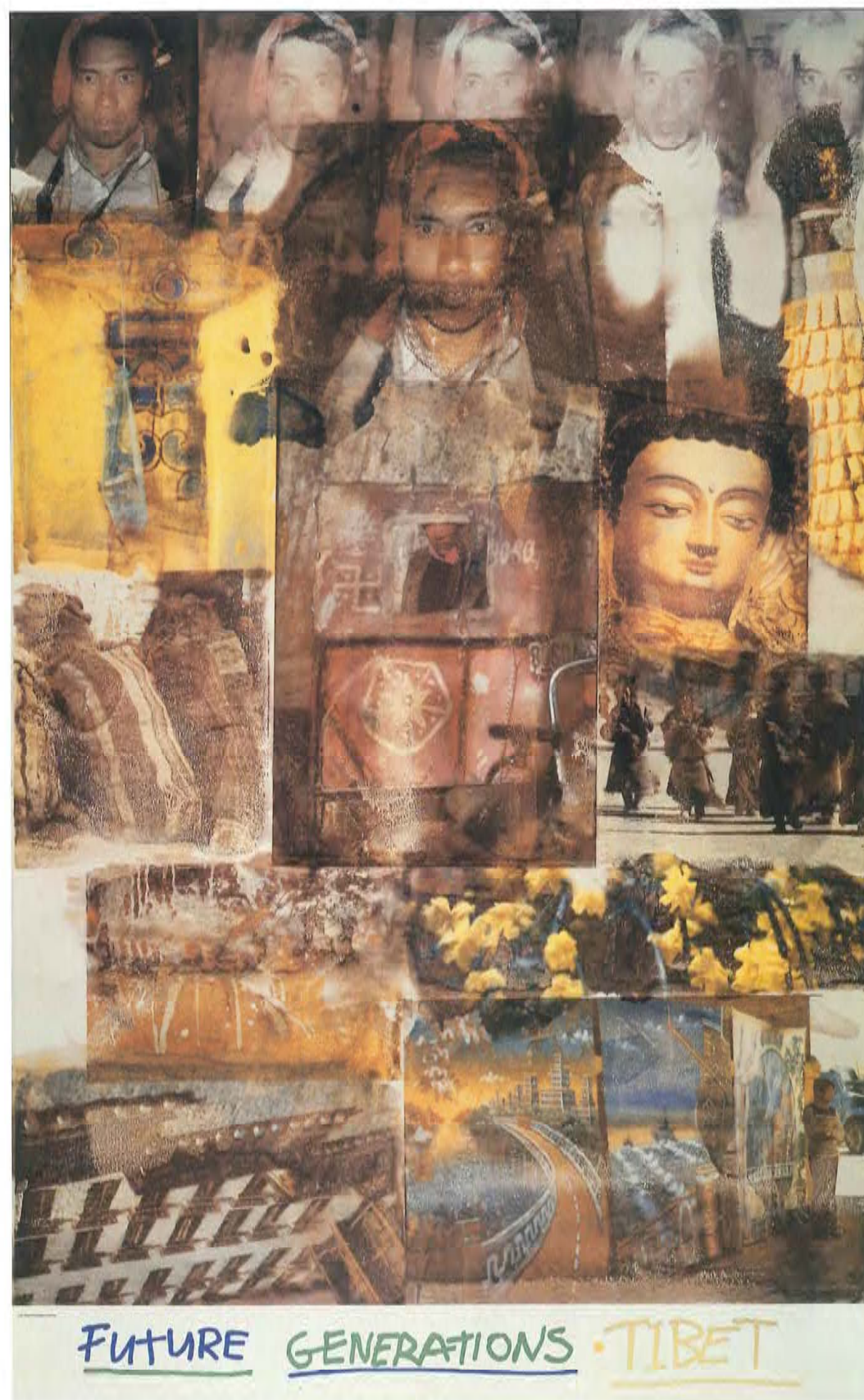
results was "Stoned Moon." His special connection with national public awareness had begun.

This exhibition focuses on posters Rauschenberg has made for projects with direct public benefit. One of his most famous early prints, "Signs" of 1970, which summed up the violence of the 1960s, alerted the art world to the depth of his social consciousness. Then came the consciousness-raising posters featured in this exhibition, starting with "Earth Day" for the first Earth Day and "Currents" devoted to the Civil Rights Movement.

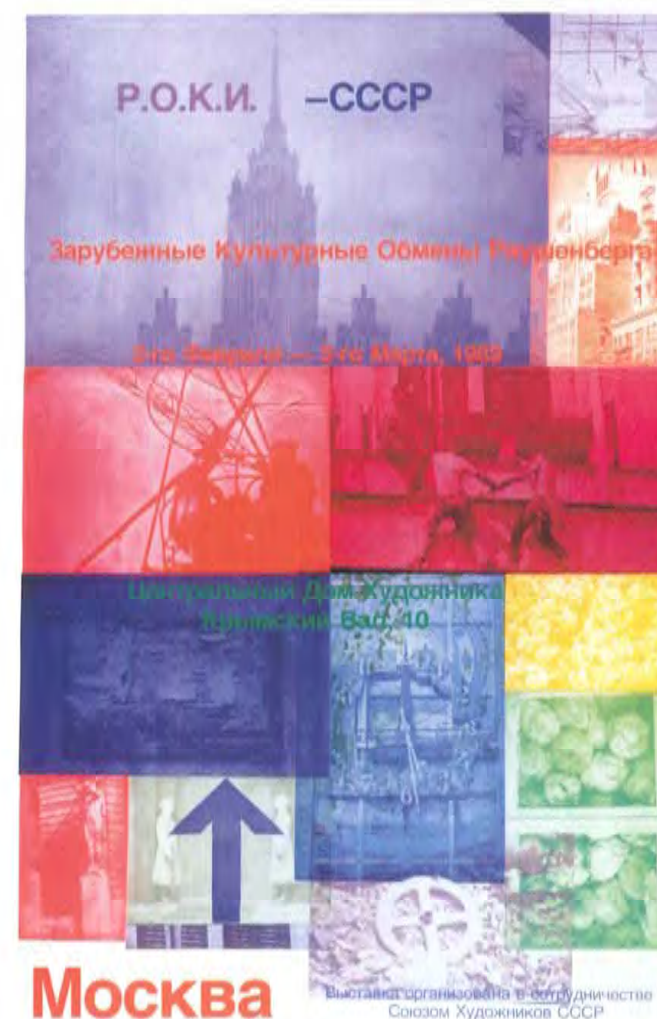
Included in this exhibition are projects that have supported Artists Rights, the United Nations, campaigns against Apartheid, Nuclear Armament, Overpopulation, and War, as well as his famous ROCI (Rauschenberg Overseas Culture Interchange) project in which he collaborated with local artists in many nations to encourage budding efforts towards contemporary expression. In the process, he opened gateways for the growth of contemporary art in such countries as Russia and China where it had been prohibited for many years. The ROCI project (1982-1990) was not the end of his global efforts. Our exhibition concludes with the hopeful "Future Generations - Tibet" of 1996.

It is a special privilege to present an overview of this aspect of Rauschenberg's work for the first time. These images are vibrant evidence of how an artist can help improve the world in which we all live. Thanks to Rauschenberg, and his curator David White, we have been able to borrow these original posters from the artist's own collection. In a postmodern world short on heroes, people – especially younger artists – are thirsty for role models who offer more than a self-centered image of what artists can do in the world.

Lanier Graham, Director
University Art Gallery
California State University, Hayward



Above: **Future Generations - Tibet**, 1996
Offset Lithograph, 42 1/2" x 26"



Cover:
Earth Day April 22 Poster, 1970
Offset Lithograph, 33 3/4" x 25 1/4"

Above:
Clan Destiny - Poster for Habitat II, 1996
Offset Lithograph, 39 1/4" x 24 7/8"

Top Left:
Last Turn - Your Turn for Earth Summit, Conference on Environment and Development, 1992, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Offset Lithograph, 25" x 26"

Left:
Exhibition Poster / ROCI USSR, 1989
Offset Lithograph, 38 3/8" x 25 1/2"

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