

14 PAPERWORKS MADE IN CHINA BY ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG
ON VIEW AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

RAUSCHENBERG IN CHINA, an exhibition of 14 paperworks from the Seven Characters series created earlier this year by Robert Rauschenberg while in the People's Republic of China, will go on view at The Museum of Modern Art on December 2, 1982. The result of a fruitful collaboration between the American artist and local Chinese craftsmen, the works will be on display in the Ground Floor Foyer of the Museum's West Wing through February 1, 1983. Riva Castleman, Director of the Department of Prints and Illustrated Books at the Museum, organized the exhibition.

For much of his career, Rauschenberg has been working with paper, sometimes incorporating it with other materials, as in collages, in other cases manipulating the raw substance to explore its intrinsic expressive qualities. His ventures into collaborative papermaking have led him halfway around the globe and have resulted in stimulating associations with traditional artisans. In 1973, the Los Angeles print workshop Gemini G.E.L., with whom Rauschenberg had worked in the past, arranged for the artist to work with craftsmen of the ancient French paper mill at Ambert. The product of four days' collaboration in the almost medieval atmosphere of the mill was a group of paper works in molds devised by the artist. Another collaboration with traditional artisans followed in 1975, as Rauschenberg, working with the craftsmen of Ahmedabad, India, continued his involvement in papermaking by using local materials to produce not only two-dimensional works, but also sculptural works formed of molded paper pulp. "As in France, these works resulted from daily and intense interaction between a cosmopolitan

yet quintessentially American artist and simple, provincial workmen and women," notes Ms. Castleman.

The works shown in RAUSCHENBERG IN CHINA are a small selection from the group of paper objects that Rauschenberg made in Jing Xian, Anhui Province in the People's Republic of China, home of the world's oldest paper mill. Between mid-June and mid-July of this year, the artist created works from the famous local Xuan paper. Using seven Chinese characters, chosen for appearance as well as meaning, he produced 70 sets of paperworks for a total of 490 individual sheets. Each work consists of thirty layers of thin Xuan paper, a layer of silk, a group of printed pieces of paper cut from Chinese posters, one of the seven Chinese characters made of molded paper pulp, and a top layer of the thinnest Xuan paper that could be manufactured. While all the works were made in Jing Xian, the cutouts came from posters purchased by Rauschenberg in Shanghai and the embroidered silk for the pendants was found in Hang Zhou.

Don Saff, an artist and printmaker from Tampa, Florida, who often has worked with Rauschenberg, made many of the technical arrangements and assisted on the project in China. The Maryland Institute of Art, through the State of Maryland (sister state of Anhui Province), facilitated access to the closed town of Jing Xian. A representative of the Anhui Artists Association accompanied Rauschenberg and acted as liaison with the extremely secretive papermakers.

Seven Characters, the series of paperworks presented here in two of its seventy versions, was published by Gemini G.E.L. in 1982.

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