



Position Specification

Robert Rauschenberg Foundation
Executive Director

Our Client

The Robert Rauschenberg Foundation builds on the legacy of Robert Rauschenberg (1925-2008) who believed strongly that creative practitioners could serve as catalysts for social change. He shared his appreciation for chance and the everyday by seeking to act in the “gap” between art and life. He was also a gifted collaborator, breaking disciplinary boundaries by experimenting with scientists, performers, and visual artists. As such, the Foundation celebrates new and even untested ways of thinking and acting.

The Robert Rauschenberg Foundation was founded by the artist himself in 1990. After Rauschenberg passed away in 2008, the Foundation transitioned to its current mission in 2012. Today, the Foundation promotes in-depth research and partnerships for staff, curators, critics, scholars, and students that open the artist’s life and work to wider interpretation and understanding. Its philanthropic activities, driven in part by a recently constituted Artists Council, primarily support small to midsize arts and socially engaged organizations that are contrarian and experimental, even courageous, in driving towards equity. In addition, the Foundation holistically sustains the creative life and well-being of artists across the disciplines by providing for a range of needs including time to think during multi-week residencies, funding for new commissions, and emergency medical grants. Finally, the Foundation supports exhibitions, publications, and special projects across the globe that reflect Rauschenberg’s joyful, responsive, and irreverent approach to making art while living an empathetic and meaningful life.

Art and Archives

Robert Rauschenberg’s art has always been one of thoughtful inclusion. Working in a wide range of subjects, styles, materials, and techniques, Rauschenberg has been called a forerunner of essentially every postwar movement since Abstract Expressionism. He remained, however, independent of any particular affiliation. At the time that he began making art in the late 1940s and early 1950s, his belief that “painting relates to both art and life” presented a direct challenge to the prevalent modernist aesthetic.

The celebrated Combines, begun in the mid-1950s, brought real-world images and objects into the realm of abstract painting and countered sanctioned divisions between painting and sculpture. These works established the artist’s ongoing dialogue between mediums, between the handmade and the readymade, and between the gestural brushstroke and the mechanically reproduced image. Rauschenberg’s lifelong commitment to collaboration—with performers, printmakers, engineers, writers, artists, and artisans from around the world—is a further manifestation of his expansive artistic philosophy. Working in a wide range of materials, techniques, and disciplines, Rauschenberg is celebrated as a forerunner for nearly every art movement since Abstract Expressionism.

The Foundation seeks to increase access to and knowledge of Rauschenberg’s art, including through a gift and purchase program to place work in leading art museums and a program that subsidizes the loan of Rauschenberg’s artworks to foster interdisciplinary study at college and university museums. Additionally, the Foundation has donated artworks that Rauschenberg collected during his lifetime to leading museums and cultural centers across the United States, and has lent Rauschenberg’s works to museums and exhibitions around the world.

The Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives contain the most comprehensive body of information on the artist’s life and career. This rich resource includes the artist’s personal writings, sketches, correspondence, and audiovisual material, as well as documentary photographs and records from his collaborators.

The bulk of Rauschenberg’s art is owned by the Foundation’s wholly-owned subsidiary, Untitled Press, Inc. (“UPI”) and is managed by the Foundation under an agreement between it and UPI. Under that agreement, the Foundation undertakes relevant storage, loan, sales and other obligations to safeguard as well as enhance the value of the artworks. Artworks owned by UPI will continue to be liquidated into cash over time to grow the Foundation.

Catalog Raisonné

The Robert Rauschenberg Foundation has embarked on an ongoing project to create a catalogue raisonné of the artist's paintings and sculptures. In keeping with the spirit of radical innovation and broad inclusiveness that drove Rauschenberg's artistic endeavors, the project will be unlike any prior catalogue raisonné for an artist of this stature in both its digital accessibility and its thematic scope.

To provide as many people as possible with the opportunity to access and engage with Rauschenberg's oeuvre, the catalogue raisonné will be published online, free of charge, in a series of releases. The first release, comprising works from 1948–53, will be published in 2025 to mark the centennial of the artist's birth. In addition to all that is found in a conventional catalogue raisonné—artwork entries, provenance, exhibition histories, and bibliographies—it will also feature essays by artists, conservators, critics, scholars, and writers to present a range of perspectives that is commensurate with the expansiveness of Rauschenberg's thinking as well as his spirit of inclusivity. Confirmed contributors include Carlos Basualdo, Catherine Craft, Susan Davidson, Giorgio di Domenico, Leah Dickerman, Darby English, Glenn Ligon, Michael Lobel, Courtney J. Martin, Helen Molesworth, Jennifer L. Roberts, Amy Sillman, Matthew Skopek, Jeffrey Weiss, and Terry Winters. Ultimately, the catalogue raisonné will cover Rauschenberg's work between 1948–2008, comprising approximately 3,000 artworks. It will not include the artist's drawings, photographs, and editions. The project is expected to take approximately fifteen to twenty years.

Programs

The Robert Rauschenberg Foundation primarily supports small to midsize arts and socially-engaged organizations that are contrarian and experimental, even courageous, in driving towards equity. In addition, the Foundation amplifies the creative life of artists and scholars across the disciplines through residencies, commissions, and accessible public platforms. Finally, the Foundation supports research, exhibitions, publications, academic partnerships and special projects across the globe that promote the legacy of Rauschenberg's joyful, responsive, and irreverent approach to making work while living an empathetic and meaningful life. In the collaborative spirit of the artist, the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation also partners with institutions and organizations to increase public access to and scholarship on Rauschenberg's artwork.

Examples of the Foundation's recent and ongoing grants include the Black and Indigenous Land Rights and Agriculture Advisory Committee, which is a multi-year program that will assist those organizations involved in redressing the related losses of Black and Indigenous people's land and capacity for wealth generation due to the long-term bias embedded in governmental and statutory systems. The Foundation has also provided emergency assistance for farm workers with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers in Florida to provide financial support and COVID-19 relief by offering free testing and cash assistance. The Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) is a worker-based human rights organization internationally recognized for its achievements in fighting human trafficking and gender-based violence at work. The CIW is also recognized for pioneering the design and development of the Worker-driven Social Responsibility paradigm, a worker-led, market-enforced approach to the protection of human rights in corporate supply chains. The Foundation also supports the Clemente Soto Velez Cultural & Education Center. Its *Historias* arts festival is based on research that recovers and elevates histories of the collaborating communities that exist across all the boroughs. This initiative, involving a selection of the 45 organizations that now compose the Latinx Arts Consortium of New York, will serve primarily low-income individuals and involve oral histories, archival research, think tanks with scholars and artists, and artists' commissions to secure the different histories while also making them more accessible through talks, performances, exhibitions, and a website.

Philanthropic funding is also administered by the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation's Artist Council, an anonymous group of working artists who assist in shaping the Foundation's philanthropy program by overseeing a portion of the Foundation's grant giving. The Artist Council has been funded in part by the Annenberg Foundation since 2020, and has awarded grants to a wide range of organizations. Some examples of work funded by the Artist Council includes support for the Omaha branch of Black and Pink, a

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national prison abolitionist organization that is dedicated to liberating LGBTQIA2S+ people and people living with HIV/AIDS; support for Brown Bag Lady, a non-profit founded in 2014 that is committed to feeding and providing other essentials to the unhoused in Los Angeles; support from Chinatown Tenants Union in their efforts to provide a space for residents to come together and provide a unified community voice on issues relating to gentrification and development; support for legal fees through ReClaiming Our Homes to fight eviction from homes leased from Caltrans that purchased the buildings decades ago to clear the way for a freeway that was never built. Each family has a court case over the next year to determine whether they can remain in their homes; and renewed support for Wide Rainbow, a contemporary art after school program that works in under-resourced neighborhoods with limited or no access to the arts or arts education in New York, Los Angeles, and Detroit.

Residencies

The Robert Rauschenberg Foundation hosts residencies at the Foundation's New York headquarters and at the artist's former Captiva, Florida, home and studio. These residencies are designed to provide time and space for research and artistic experimentation across the disciplines. Selectors, who represent cultural and artistic diversity, anonymously identify artists and other creative thinkers, emerging and recognized, from a variety of backgrounds, disciplines and geographies to create a diverse mix of participants for seven annual residencies.

The Rauschenberg Residency in Captiva, Florida, is a creative center that welcomes artists of all disciplines from around the world to live, work, and create. The residency is located on Robert Rauschenberg's former property on Captiva Island where he lived and worked for nearly four decades. The facility, which includes the 8,000-square-foot studio Rauschenberg built in 1992 and a collection of historic homes and studio spaces, is infused with beauty and tranquility and marked by its unique history. The Robert Rauschenberg Foundation launched the residency program in 2012–13 with a series of five pilot residencies that served to inform and shape the program. There are eight four- and five-week residencies a year that serve ~100 artists and scholars. Selectors anonymously identify artists and creative thinkers from a diverse mix of disciplines, backgrounds, geographies, ages, and career levels, who are interested in working in an interdisciplinary environment and are open to the idea of collaboration.

The Rauschenberg Residency is inspired by Rauschenberg's early years at Black Mountain College where an artistic community brought out elements central to his art, collaboration, and exploration. The residency advances new work, extends practices into diverse mediums, and serves as a research and development lab. It fosters the ideal that artistic practice advances mutual understanding as it engenders a focus on conserving a sensitive and pristine environment fully integrated with the local surroundings. The harmonious juxtaposition of natural landscape, modern and adaptable studios, and idyllic housing provides a perfect backdrop for the artistic process. The spirit of Robert Rauschenberg is everywhere.

The Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives Research Residency is an opportunity for researchers and scholars interested in visiting the Rauschenberg Foundation and its Archives in New York City. The program provides partial support for incurred costs related to travel and lodging expenses related to the visit. The Robert Rauschenberg Foundation Archives, consisting of Robert Rauschenberg's personal papers and the records from his Florida and New York studios, is the most comprehensive body of information on the artist's life and career. The Archives Research Residency supports continued scholarly and investigative use of these materials by supporting individuals that demonstrate a compelling need to use the archives and addressing financial barriers that may prohibit onsite access to the archives. In addition, the application is open to all individuals, thereby encouraging research opportunities that move beyond traditional art historical discourse.

Inspired by Rauschenberg's iconoclastic and inclusive approach to living and working, the Rauschenberg Residency 381 integrates artists into the daily work activities of the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation headquarters in New York. Conceived to be nimble in structure, each residency will uniquely reflect the artist's project and needs. The Rauschenberg Residency 381 provides artists with a space to work, think, experiment, and create within Rauschenberg's 381 Lafayette Street home and studio.

The Role

Reporting directly to the Robert Rauschenberg's Board of Directors, the Executive Director will oversee all aspects of the Foundation's art, archives, programs, philanthropic activities, marketing, and broad long-term strategy. They will oversee all aspects of the Foundation's operations, including financial management, staff management, Board partnership, engagement with commercial art entities, brand development, and more.

Building upon the Foundation's track record of accomplishment, the Executive Director will partner with the Board to develop the organization's strategic vision for the future, and ensure that it is carrying out its mission in the most effective way possible. The Executive Director will work in close partnership with the Board and staff, and will ensure that all constituents are united under a common set of goals. They will help the Foundation develop new, creative ways to expand its impact, including honing the Foundation's philanthropic priorities, and will further develop the Foundation's brand and reputation as a leading innovator among artist-endowed foundations. This will include engagement with philanthropy experts, artists, museums, and the commercial art world.

A key aspect of the Executive Director's role will be to manage and continue to develop a talented staff to oversee all aspects of the Foundation's development, growth, and ongoing programs and operations. They will work closely with staff to support the implementation of key initiatives, and will empower others in the organization to innovate and grow. The Executive Director will actively foster a collegial and collaborative environment internally and, build a culture focused on accountability, respect, and inclusion, so that organizational objectives and defined goals are accomplished and celebrated; and champion diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. As the primary liaison to the Board, they will develop a highly productive and effective partnership with Board members in service to the Foundation's mission.

The Robert Rauschenberg Foundation has a full-time team of approximately 30 professionals. The Foundation currently has an operating budget of approximately \$15 million. The Foundation has reserves substantially in excess of \$250 million, which will continue to grow over time as additional artworks owned by UPI are sold. The Foundation also has physical assets in New York and Captiva, a storage facility located outside New York City, and certain artworks not owned by UPI. The balance of the artworks left by Rauschenberg at his death are, as noted, owned by UPI and themselves have substantial value.

Ultimately, the Board of the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation seeks a leader who is captivated by the opportunity to successfully lead and grow this globally recognized artist foundation that embraces and champions Rauschenberg's spirit of innovation, openness, creativity, and fearlessness in all aspects of its strategy, philanthropy, programming, and operations.

Candidate Profile

The Robert Rauschenberg Foundation seeks a leader who is inspired by the opportunity to lead and grow a globally recognized artist foundation which furthers Robert Rauschenberg's legacy in all aspects of its strategy, philanthropy, programming, and operations.

The ideal candidate will be an experienced and strategic leader with knowledge of the arts and cultural landscape, as well as the philanthropic sector. They will ideally bring strong experience partnering with artists, and a track record of fostering trust and respect in artistic communities. Aligning with the Foundation's mission, they will be a compelling and generous leader who will embrace the opportunity to spearhead the strategy, programs, and operations of the Foundation. They will have demonstrated prior success leading an institution or large department/enterprise, and developing and executing a strategic vision that encompasses the organization's mission, values, and current activities.

The CEO will bring an entrepreneurial mindset and an ability to build a collaborative and supportive working environment that fosters collaboration, inclusion, and accountability. They will possess exemplary interpersonal communication skills in order to partner effectively with the Board, staff, and other key stakeholders, ensuring the Foundation continues to be as impactful as possible and that its brand

continues to grow. They will be a diplomatic and confident communicator with a spirit of openness. They will introduce innovative ideas, but will value the extensive institutional knowledge of the Board and staff, as well as those who knew Rauschenberg during his lifetime. Above all else, the next Executive Director will embody Rauschenberg's values and will tirelessly work to bring others along, both internally and externally, on the journey to fulfill the Foundation's mission.

In terms of the performance and personal characteristics preferred for the position, we would highlight the following:

Strategic Leadership and Intellectual Vision

- Demonstrated success developing and implementing a compelling vision and strategy for an organization. They will evidence an ability to guide and substantially contribute to the short and long-term goals of the Foundation and how to best execute against those goals.
- Consensus-seeking but decisive approach that enables them to pursue the Foundation's vision and deliver results; values and deeply considers input from others, but has the confidence to make ultimate decisions and hold others accountable.
- Innovative yet thoughtful approach to making changes; highly intelligent and also understands and appreciates the value of existing knowledge among the staff and Board members.

Management of Teams and Resources

- Experience managing a professional staff and budget; ideally has experience overseeing both tangible and intangible assets; brings an even-handed and reasoned approach to budgetary decision-making based on a clear understanding of the strategic financial objectives of the organization.
- Recruits and cultivates top talent, including opportunities to build the philanthropic team; manages performance with accountability; widely viewed as a leader who develops others, and who trusts and leverages the expertise of others; fosters a culture of collaboration and respect.
- Brings a lens of professionalism and ensures that the right people are in the right roles with the bandwidth and expertise to take responsibility for their respective functions, and that they function highly as a team; considers areas where the Foundation may benefit from additional hiring and structure.
- Self-reflective and aware of their own limitations; leads by example and drives the organization's performance with an attitude of continuous improvement by being open to feedback and personal development; encourages others to share the spotlight, and celebrates the success of the team.

Building Relationships and Influence

- A credible and compelling spokesperson for the Foundation; rallies internal and external constituents behind the Foundation's mission; builds the Foundation's brand as well as relationships with artistic and philanthropic communities, the commercial art community, and other publics regionally, nationally, and internationally.
- Diplomatic and emotionally intelligent; able to successfully drive groups to agreement and align diverse stakeholders with organizational goals.
- Able to build productive relationships with Board members; a track record of working directly with a Board is ideal.

Inclusive Leadership

- Deep personal commitment to diversity, equity, access, and inclusion in all aspects of their work; track record of building and championing teams that are substantively diverse and reflective of the diversity of the community their organization serves;

- Demonstrated commitment to inclusive leadership, displaying cultural competence while operating in an environment with a range of diverse constituents and communities.

Passion for the Mission

- Comprehension of the art world and working with artists, the art market, and museum practices.
- Appreciation of Robert Rauschenberg's artistic legacy place within history and culture, including the fearlessness, innovation, and multidisciplinary approach that Rauschenberg exemplified in his art and philanthropic endeavors.
- Values the input of those who knew Rauschenberg and those who have been with the Foundation for many years, while still bringing a new perspective around how the organization might achieve its mission most effectively.
- Above all else, the next Executive Director must have a passion for Rauschenberg's legacy and how his art and ideals remain relevant both today and in the future.

The Robert Rauschenberg Foundation is an equal opportunity employer. The community and audience RRF serves is diverse, and they wish to foster that diversity in their workplace. Toward that end, RRF does not discriminate against individuals in hiring, employment or promotion on the basis of race, religion, color, sex/gender, gender identity and gender expression, age, marital status, national origin, sexual orientation, citizenship, disability status, veteran or military status, political belief, pregnancy, genetic information or any other characteristic protected by law.

Compensation

The estimated salary for this position is approximately \$475,000. The salary of the finalist selected for this role will be determined based on various factors, including, but not limited to, scope of role, level of experience, accomplishments, internal equity, budget, and subject to Fair Market Value evaluation. The base compensation range listed is a good faith determination of potential base compensation as a component of the total compensation for the role at the time of this job advertisement and may be modified in the future.

Contact

Russell Reynolds Associates has been exclusively retained for this search and prospective candidates are invited to contact Russell Reynolds Associates directly at RauschenbergFoundation@russellreynolds.com. All inquiries and discussions will be considered strictly confidential.

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