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Art Fairs ,

The 10 Most Spectacular Artworks at Frieze New York 2017

From the art to the prices, there's plenty to marvel at in this year's fair.

Andrew Goldstein, May 4, 2017

ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG

Primo Calle/ROCI VENEZUELA, 1985

Venus Over Manhattan (New York)

Price: \$3.75 million



In 1985, Robert Rauschenberg embarked on one of the most audacious projects of his life: the Rauschenberg Overseas Culture

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Exchange, an idealistic attempt to knit the world's cultures together by traveling to 10 different countries, embedding himself in each for a long enough time to pick up the local texture, and then making a body of paintings transmuting each country's national identity into art. The project, abbreviated as ROCI (the name, incidentally, of Rauschenberg's pet turtle), also marked the artist's return to silkscreening after a 21-year hiatus from the process. After completing the series, Rauschenberg debuted it in a museum in that country along with his older work, then gave a major work from the series to the museum and another one to the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., which held an exhibition of the overall ROCI project when it was completed.

Today, most of the other works remain in the Rauschenberg estate—except for this gargantuan painting at Venus Over Manhattan's booth. Made in 1985, it's the largest painting the artist made in Venezuela, and it long resided in the collection of Donald Saff, the artistic director of the ROCI project. Look at it closely and you'll see construction sites, a picture of Pope John Paul II (who visited Venezuela for the first time in 1985), a chicken roasting over an open fire, and other elements Rauschenberg associated with the country. At nearly 18 feet long, it provides a tantalizing glimpse of the untold treasures from the artist's colossal output that will be discovered when his MoMA retrospective opens later this month.