

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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PRESS RELEASE

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ED RUSCHA: *On the Road: An Artist Book of the Classic Novel by Jack Kerouac*

Monday, 12 October – Saturday, 28 November 2009

The original novel was published in 1957 and it's about a group of crazy young people who just travel back and forth across the United States. Sometimes they hitch-hike and sometimes they drive cars. They steal cars and just want to be on the road the whole time. I've always liked that notion.

--Ed Ruscha

In 1951, Jack Kerouac wrote *On the Road* on his typewriter as a continuous 120 foot-long scroll, feverishly recording in twenty days his experiences during road trips in the United States and Mexico, which he began with Neil Cassady in the late 1940s. *On the Road* was finally published in 1957, and Kerouac was immediately acknowledged as the voice of the Beat Generation, a new group of writers, including Allen Ginsberg and William S. Burroughs, who became known for their embracing of radical free-verse style.

Ed Ruscha's singular art has recorded the shifting emblems of American life in the form of Hollywood logos, stylized gas stations, and archetypal landscapes. His wry choice of words and indirect phrases mines the perpetual interplay between language as a physical thing and language as a transparent medium. During the sixties, he created a series of cheaply printed photographic books as deadpan meditations on the romantic vision of the road epitomized by the Beats. His typologies of the urban environment of Los Angeles included *Twenty-six Gasoline Stations* (1963) and *Every Building on the Sunset Strip* (1966). In *Royal Road Test* (1967), he brought the word and the road together in a conceptual prank by documenting himself dropping a vintage typewriter from a speeding Buick.

Over the last couple of years, Ruscha has turned his attention to *On the Road*, resulting in his own version of Kerouac's Beat bible. Kerouac's entire text appears accompanied by black and white photographic illustrations that Ruscha has either taken himself, commissioned from other photographers, or selected from found images to refer closely to the details and impressions that the author describes, from car parts to jazz instruments, from sandwich stacks to tire burns on a desert road.

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Coinciding with "Ed Ruscha : Fifty Years of Painting" at the Hayward Gallery in London, Gagosian is pleased to present an exhibition of selected illustrated spreads from this special version of *On the Road*, along with a bound copy of the limited-edition book.

On the Road is published by Gagosian Gallery and Steidl. The leather-bound book comprises 228 pages, signed and numbered by the artist in an edition of 350 and presented in a slip-case.

Ed Ruscha was born in Omaha, Nebraska in 1937 and studied painting, photography, and graphic design at the Chouinard Art Institute (now CalArts). His work is collected by major museums worldwide and has been shown extensively, most recently the drawing retrospective *Cotton Puffs, Q-Tips®, Smoke and Mirrors*, which toured U.S museums in 2004-2005 and *Ed Ruscha: Photographer* at the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Musée National Jeu de Paume, Paris in 2006. "Ed Ruscha : Fifty Years of Painting" opens at the Hayward Gallery on October 14.

For further inquiries please contact the gallery at london@gagosian.com or at +44.207.493.3020.