

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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PRESS RELEASE
GAGOSIAN GALLERY
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Tue–Sat 11:00am–7:00pm



ED RUSCHA: *Books & Co.* **ED RUSCHA: *Prints and Photographs***

Thursday, 12 March–Thursday, 7 May 2015

Opening reception: Thursday, March 12th, from 6:00 to 8:00 pm

Gagosian Paris is pleased to present two exhibitions that explore Ed Ruscha's innovation and legacy across printed media. The exhibitions are organized by Gagosian director Bob Monk.

"Prints and Photographs" surveys Ruscha's prints of the past forty years, together with rarely seen photographs produced since 1959, providing an in-depth examination of the unrestricted gestures that fuel his assiduous art. Ranging freely and dexterously across traditional, unconventional, or sometimes even comestible materials, Ruscha's prints are a fluid forum for the spirited investigation of what a limited-edition artwork can be. His absorption and re-thinking of the requirements of each graphic procedure and format result in step-by-step transformations, a process that echoes the eternal return of the subjects that make up his broader oeuvre.

Ruscha arrived in Los Angeles in 1956 to study commercial art at the Chouinard Art Institute (now CalArts), and underwent a six-month apprenticeship with a printer beginning in 1958. Attracted to the reproducibility, collaborative processes, and happy accidents specific to printmaking, he began to create lithographic editions, infusing the Pop and Conceptual sensibilities of the time with vernacular wit and existential melancholy. His exquisitely refined prints engage a breadth of formal themes, from text and typography to still life and quotidian architecture, played out in a spirit of rigorous yet restless experimentation.

Ruscha's early photographs also provided foundations for his broader artistic practice. Isolating overlooked everyday subjects, he used the camera to "flatten" the images he intended to draw and paint, from apartment buildings to commodities and comestibles such as raisins and bottles of turpentine. Exercises in the ambiguity of scale, such as *Untitled (Newspaper Sculpture)* (1959–60, printed in 2005) and *Dodger's Stadium* (1967, printed in 2013) reveal a common abstraction in small objects and large-scale architecture; while *Joyce Wallace's Automatic Table Arrangement* (1962, printed in 2005) shows Ruscha's compositional mind at work. *Roof Top Views* (1961) pictures local suburban streets from a high vantage point, while *Roof Top Views 50 Years Later* (2003) returns to the same locations to reveal neighborhoods only subtly changed by the sluggish pace of time, economy, and demographics.

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“Books & Co.” presents Ruscha’s legendary artist books together with those of more than 70 contemporary artists from all over the world—from Russia to Japan to the Netherlands—who have responded directly and diversely to his inspiration. Some of the books are installed so that viewers can browse their pages.

Inspired by the unassuming books that he found in street stalls during a trip to Europe, in 1962 Ruscha published his first artist book, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* under his own imprint, National Excelsior Press. A slim, cheaply produced volume, then priced at \$3.50, *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* is exactly what its title suggests: twenty-six photographs of gas stations with captions indicating their brand and location, just like works of art. Initially, the book met with poor reception, and was even rejected by the Library of Congress for its “unorthodox form and supposed lack of information.” However, over time it acquired cult status, and by the 1980s it was hailed as one of the first truly modern artist books. Ruscha followed this up with a succession of similarly self-evident and deadpan books, including *Some Los Angeles Apartments* (1965), *Nine Swimming Pools and a Broken Glass* (1968), and *Real Estate Opportunities* (1970), all of which combined the literalness of early California pop art with a photographic aesthetic informed by minimalist sequence and seriality, shot through with a wry sense of humor.

Ruscha’s artist books have been deeply influential on peers and followers—from Bruce Nauman’s *Burning Small Fires* (1968), where Nauman burned a copy of Ruscha’s *Various Small Fires and Milk* (1964) and photographed the process; to Julie Cook’s *Some Las Vegas Strip Clubs* (2008), which turns the lights on nocturnal haunts; to Mishka Henner’s detailed *Fifty-one US Military Outposts* (2010), comprising aerial views of international U.S. military bases. Between these early and recent examples are a wealth of responses to Ruscha’s ideas by artists from different generations and cultural contexts, gathered here in one celebratory exhibition.

Participating artists include Amanny Ahmad, Pascal Anders, Edgar Arceneaux, Ben Barretto, Eric Baskauskas, Doro Boehme, Jeff Brouws, Denise Scott Brown, Joanna Brown, Wendy Burton, Corinne Carlson, Dan Colen, Julie Cook, Kim Corbel, Claudia de la Torre, Jen DeNike, Eric Doeringer, Frank Eye, Thomas Galler, Anne-Valérie Gasc, Steve Giasson, Oliver Griffin, Daniel S. Guy, Dejan Habicht, Marcella Hackbardt, Sebastian Hackenschmidt, Karen Henderson, Mishka Henner, Trevor Hernandez, Kai-Olaf Hesse, Marla Hlady, Dominik Hruza, Steven Izenour, Sveinn Fannar Jóhannsson, Gregory Eddi Jones, Rinata Kajumova, Shohachi Kimura, Hubert Kretschmer, Sowon Kwon, Tanja Lazetic, Gabriel Lester, Jochen Manz, Michael Maranda, Scott McCarney, Jerry McMillan, Dan Monick, Jonathan Monk, Simon Morris, Maurizio Nannucci, Bruce Nauman, John O’Brian, Stefan Oláh, Michalis Pichler, Tadej Pogačar, Susan Porteous, Clara Prioux, Joseph Putrock, Hassan Rahim, Achim Riechers, Craig Ritchie, Tom Sachs, Joachim Schmid, Andreas Schmidt, Jean-Frédéric Schnyder, David Schoerner, Yann Sérandour, Travis Shaffer, Izet Sheshivari, Tom Sowden, Derek Sullivan, Yoshikazu Suzuki, Aggie Toppins, Louisa Van Leer, Robert Venturi, and Hermann Zschiegner.

An international conference on Ruscha’s work will take place in two sessions; the first at the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris on March 11 and 12, followed by the Centre de Création Contemporaine, Tours on March 13. For full details of participants please consult www.centrepompidou.fr and www.ccc-art.com.

Published by MIT Press in 2013, *Various Small Books: Referencing Small Books by Ed Ruscha* documents ninety-one of the books inspired by Ruscha’s own, reproducing covers and sample layouts from each, along with a detailed description. *Various Small Books...* also includes selections from Ruscha’s books and an appendix listing most of the known Ruscha book tributes.

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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 museums worldwide. Recent solo museum exhibitions include the drawing retrospective "Cotton Puffs, Q-Tips®, Smoke and Mirrors," which toured U.S. museums in 2004–05; "Ed Ruscha," MAXXI, Rome (2004); "Ed Ruscha: Photographer," Jeu de Paume, Paris (2006, traveled to Kunsthaus Zurich; and Museum Ludwig, Cologne); "Ed Ruscha: Fifty Years of Painting," Hayward Gallery, London (2009, traveled to Haus der Kunst, Munich; and Moderna Museet, Stockholm); "Ed Ruscha: Road Tested," Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas (2011); "On the Road," Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2011, traveled to Denver Art Museum, Colorado; and Museum of Contemporary Art, Miami); "Reading Ed Ruscha," Kunsthaus Bregenz, Austria (2012); "Artist Rooms on Tour: Ed Ruscha," Tate Gallery, London (2012, traveled to Hatton Gallery, Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne, England); "Ed Ruscha: Standard," Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2012–13, traveled to Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA); "Ed Ruscha: Los Angeles Apartments," Kunstmuseum Basel (2013); "Ed Ruscha: Books and Paintings," Brandhorst Museum, Munich (2013); and "In Focus: Ed Ruscha," J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles (2013). Ruscha represented the United States in the 51st Venice Biennale (2005). In 2012, he curated "The Ancients Stole All Our Great Ideas" at Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien.

For further information please contact Edouard Pradère at edoaurd@gagosian.com or at +33.1.75.00.05.92. All images are subject to copyright. Gallery approval must be granted prior to reproduction.

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Image: *Union, Needles, California* from Ed Ruscha's artist book *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* (1962)

Gagosian Gallery was established in 1980 by Larry Gagosian.

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