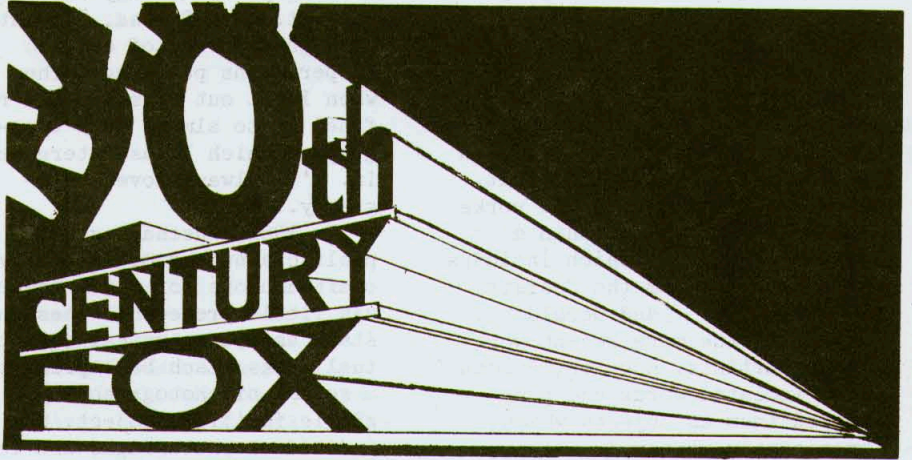


Large Trademark With Eight Spotlights, 1962



"Any common object if looked at long enough and hard enough will lose its temporal identity and become an abstract form." (John Russell, Pop Art Redefined)

Edward Ruscha, a Los Angeles artist, is often called a pop artist or a neo-surrealist. His originality lies in his choice and treatment of subject matter. He is probably the first artist to depict words as three-dimensional objects and to employ them as his primary subject matter.

Early in his career, in paintings of a Standard Gas Station or a Twentieth Century Fox trademark, the words remain within a sociological context. The use of words in these works stands comfortably within a diverse tradition which includes many artists from the Cubists

and Gerald

Murphy to the more recent work of pop artists. However, Ruscha soon isolated words and presented them as objects which, prominently centered on the canvas or paper, hover illusionistically above tonal grounds. A good example of this is the pastel Music. Large Trademark With Eight Spotlights (1962) is a landmark work for a number of reasons not the least of which is its anticipation of Ruscha's later interest in words as three-dimensional entities.

It is sometimes difficult to reconcile the viewers' unabashed delight in the literary content and visual puns in his work with the artist's claim that he is far less interested in the meaning and the ambiguities of the words than in the style and technique of their presentation.

Ruscha's preoccupation with words as subject matter stems directly from his interest and training in graphic design. Born in Omaha, Nebraska in 1937, his family moved to Oklahoma

when he was five. In 1956, he moved to Los Angeles to attend the Chouinard Art Institute where he majored in industrial and graphic design. During the mid-sixties he did the layout for Artforum, his name on the masthead as Eddie Russia (a pun on his often mispronounced surname, correctly said "Rushay"). Specific inspiration came from certain works by Jasper Johns (e.g. Tennyson 1958) in which Johns used words seemingly outside any rational context. Says Ruscha, "I went through a period of doing Jasper Johns paintings. Then when I got out of school, I refined it to almost pure typography, which I was interested in. I've always loved typography."

In 1962, Ruscha began to publish a number of carefully crafted books for which there was little precedent. These now stand as proto-typical conceptual works. Each book presents a series of photographs on a single familiar subject. The individual photographs are intentionally indifferent to aesthetic considerations. However, when combined together they offer a startling perspective on the commonplace.

In Every Building On The Sunset Strip (which folds out to a 27 foot "strip") Ruscha chooses to record in the prosaic daylight hours an area long associated with glamorous night life. In Thirtyfour Parking Lots (which actually includes only 31) he shows aerial views of deserted parking lots in which they assume something of the stylized elegance of eighteenth century gardens. Typically, Ruscha disassociates himself from this rather remarkable result of his labors. Rather he finds greater interest in the areas which show the heaviest oil stains. These, he points out, indicate the favored parking places.

One of the most gifted

draughtsmen and print-makers working today, Ruscha is an extraordinary craftsman who excels in matters of typography, layout and technique. Despite the influence that his works have had on both the pop and the conceptual art movements, Ruscha is not consciously concerned with expanding the boundaries of art history. Ironically, this very casual stance combined with his original accomplishments have quietly challenged basic assumptions about the aristocratic nature of art.

AMK

"I separate myself from the English definition of the word. Some of the words came out as though they are puns, but I am not interested in punning the word, although some of the things happen to look or feel that way."

Edward Ruscha (as quoted by David Bourdon, 1971)

[Ruscha] is completely uninterested in the ambiguousness of the words placed in isolation. What he originally sought, in fact, was a neutral subject matter - one completely removed from the aesthetic issues of the time. The typography, like the words he uses, is never invented... words become transformed... Ruscha has little interest in words as such; they are merely a device on which to hang a painting. Thus he uses them sentimentally in much the same manner, for example, that a Cubist painter would use a certain range of still-life objects - the fruit dish, the musical instrument and the jug.

John Coplans  
Ten From Los Angeles, 1966

Works in MATRIX:  
Large Trademark with Eight Spotlights, 1962, oil on canvas, 67 1/8" x 133 3/4". Lent by Stephen Mazoh and Co., Inc., New York City.

Strange Catch For A Fresh Water Fish, 1965, oil on canvas, 59 1/4" x 55". Lent by Stephen Mazoh and Co., New York City.

Music, 1968, pastel and pencil on paper, 11" x 13 1/4". Lent by Paul J. Schupf, New York City.

Cheese Circle, 1975, pastel and zinc oxide on paper, 14 1/4" x 22 3/4". Lent by Leo Castelli Gallery, New York City.

Bolting Blood With Fly, 1969, lithograph, 8" x 9 7/8". Lent by Yale University Art Museum. Emerson Tuttle, B.A. '14, Print Fund.

Drops, 1971, lithograph, 20" x 28". Lent by Yale University Art Museum. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Brooke Alexander, B.A. '60.

Standard Station, 1966, silk-screen, 25 3/4" x 40 1/8". Lent by Paul J. Schupf, New York City.

Fruit Metrecal Hollywood, 1971, organic silkscreen (grape and apricot jam, chocolate Metrecal.) Lent by Paul J. Schupf, New York City.

Every Building On The Sunset Strip, 1966, book with foldout, 7" x 7" x 324". Unlimited edition. Published by Heavy Industry Publications, Hollywood. Auerbach Art Library, Wadsworth Atheneum.

Thirtyfour Parking Lots In Los Angeles, 1967, book, 10" x 8". Published by Heavy Industry Publications, Hollywood. Auerbach Art Library, Wadsworth Atheneum.

Selected one-man exhibitions:  
Ferus Gallery, Los Angeles  
'63 (first), '64, '64; Alexander  
Iolas Gallery, NYC '67, '70;  
Irving Blum Gallery, Los  
Angeles '68, '69; Rudolph  
Zwirner, Cologne '68; Nigel  
Greenwood, London '71, '73;  
Ace, Los Angeles '73, '75;  
Minneapolis Institute of Arts  
Edward Ruscha: Young Artist  
'72; Leo Castelli, NYC '74.

Selected group exhibitions:  
Pasadena Art Museum, New  
Paintings of Common Objects  
'62; Oakland Art Museum, Pop  
Art USA '63; Solomon Guggen-  
heim Museum, NYC American  
Drawings '64; Solomon Guggen-  
heim Museum, NYC Word and  
Images '65; Sao Paulo Bienal  
9, Environment USA '67; V  
Paris Biennale '67; Newport  
Harbor Art Gallery, Balboa,  
California Joe Goode & Edward  
Ruscha '68; Museum of Modern  
Art, NYC Tamarind: Homage to  
Lithography '69; Hayward  
Gallery, London Pop Art '69;  
Museum of Modern Art, NYC  
Information '70; XXXV Venice  
Biennial '70; Museum Boy-  
mans - Van Beuningen, Rotter-  
dam Joe Goode, Kenneth Price  
and Edward Ruscha '72; Whitney  
Museum of American Art, NYC  
American Pop Art '74.

Selected listing of books pub-  
lished by the artist (Heavy  
Industry Publications):  
Twenty-six Gasoline Stations  
'62; Various Small Fires and  
Milk '64; Some Los Angeles  
Apartments '65; Every Building  
on the Sunset Strip '66; Thirty-  
four Parking Lots '67; Crackers  
'69; A Few Palm Trees '71;  
Colored People '72.

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Selected statements by the  
artist:  
"Concerning Various Small Fires,  
Edward Ruscha Discusses His  
Perplexing Publications,"  
(interview with John Coplans)  
Artforum, vol. 3, no. 5 (Feb-  
ruary '66) pp. 24-25.  
"Talking to Edward Ruscha,"  
(interview with Christopher  
Fox) Studio 179 (June '70)  
p. 281.  
"The Artist and Politics: A  
Symposium," Artforum, vol. 9,  
no. 1 (Sept. '70) p. 38.

Selected bibliography about  
Ruscha:

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Praeger (New York) '66.  
Russell, John and Suzi Gablik,  
eds., Pop Art Redefined, Praeger  
(New York) '69.  
Bourdon, David. "A Heap of  
Words About Ed Ruscha," Art  
International, vol. 15, no. 9  
(Nov. '71) p. 25.  
Foster, Edward and Edward  
Ruscha. Edward Ruscha (Ed-  
ward Rew-shay) Young Artist  
The Minneapolis Institute of  
Arts '72.  
Bourdon, David. "Ruscha as  
Publisher [Or All Booked Up]"  
Art News, vol. 61, no. 2  
(April '72) p. 32.  
Larson, Philip. "Ruscha in  
Minneapolis," Print Collectors  
Newsletter 3 (July-August '72)  
p. 52.  
Antin, Eleanor. "Reading  
Ruscha," Art in America, vol.  
61, no. 6 (Nov.-Dec. '73) p. 64.  
Alloway, Lawrence. American  
Pop Art Collier Books (New York)  
'74.