

Edward Ruscha Biography*

Ed Ruscha was born in Omaha, Nebraska in 1937. At the age of 18 he moved to Los Angeles, where he studied at the Chouinard Art Institute in the late 1950's, and has lived there ever since. In 2004, following his exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, and the National Gallery, Washington, D.C., critic Peter Scheldahl called Ruscha "one of the four most influential artists to have emerged in the nineteen sixties."

As a major contemporary artist, Ruscha has had important shows all over the world. He is represented by the Gagosian Gallery in New York and Los Angeles. He has had numerous retrospective exhibitions: at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (1983), the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris (1989), the Hirshorn Museum in LA (2000), and the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia in Madrid, Spain (2002). He was the United States representative at the 51st Venice Biennale in 2005. Ruscha's recent solo shows include an exhibition of his photographs that opened at the Jeu de Paume in Paris in 2006 and travels to Kunsthau Zurich and Museum Ludwig, Cologne. Ruscha's work is in the collections of major museums worldwide. His public commissions include murals at the Miami-Dade Public Library in Miami, Florida, the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, and the Denver Central Library in Colorado.

Over the years, Ruscha has created a number of prints at Crown Point Press (see www.crownpoint.com). Five etchings Ruscha completed during his most recent residency at Crown Point Press are drawings of outdoor billboards. "The sign shapes are a combination of all the signs I have ever seen or observed in my lifetime," explains Ruscha. Part of the attraction Ruscha has to signs is his interest in observing and recycling "what is out there in the world." During Ruscha's many road trips between Los Angeles and the mid west to visit his family, he paid close attention to the signs and markers of American life. His paintings, drawings and photographs of intersections and other California cityscapes (gas stations and freeways, signs and logos, palm trees and swimming pools) have fundamentally changed American landscape art.

Ruscha is famous for his drawings, paintings and prints of words. He has said he snatches them out of the air, capturing fragments of the everyday, overheard conversations, radio program, or public signs. In addition to studying commercial photography at Chouinard Art Institute, Ruscha also took graphic design classes and even worked as a typesetter for a professional printer. Typefaces and advertisements have become tools in his work, just like photography. He likes all kinds of typefaces but has often said he prefers neutral or non-styled lettering.

In the spring of 2006, Ruscha created *Public Market*, the only word image in the group of five etchings of outdoor billboards he completed during his recent residency at Crown Point Press. The drawing is minimal and direct. A warm, creamy background of *chine colle* softens the austerity of the image, in which pale gray words meld with the delicate armature of the sign. The Janet Turner Print Museum is delighted to have acquired *Public Market* for its collection. As the first annual Turner Award for Excellence in the Arts, the print will be added to the collection in the name of the Chico Arts Commission, the first awardee of this annual prize.

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