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ED RUSCHA

Petro-Plots

The Remba Gallery is pleased to present *Petro-Plots* by Ed Ruscha. The exhibition will take place at 462 N. Robertson Boulevard in West Hollywood from September 2 – October 26, 2002. An opening reception for the artist will be held on Sunday, September 2, from 6-8 p.m. in conjunction with the West Hollywood Galleries.

Ed Ruscha came to Los Angeles in 1956 to study at the Chouinard Art Institute (now Cal Arts), where he learned the fundamentals of layout, lettering and illustration. During this time, he was also introduced to printmaking, a central part of his work since 1959, as an apprentice at Plantain Press. These experiences proved to be quite influential on the artist's career as he has worked in multiple disciplines: printmaking, painting and photography.

Ed Ruscha is one of the quintessential documenters of the American landscape. The artist witnessed the commercialization of society during the postwar era, during his continuous treks along Route 66 from Los Angeles to his hometown of Oklahoma City. Over time, this vast expanse of open plains and flat land became the land of billboards, neon signs and strip malls.

What Mr. Ruscha saw on his journeys, led to his first book, and lent the imagery for one of his most well known images, *The Standard Station*. The book, a series of deadpan black-and-white photographs documented twenty-six filling stations along the famous route. These stations were also depicted in paintings and screenprints. The exaggerated, sharp angles and piercing edges of the station are set against a soft, atmospheric background. These works also began his exploration of the idea of the word as a subject and object; the use of standard as a brand name and to mean commonplace.

This examination of the visual qualities of language evolved into a fascination. Not only does he depict single words such as *Adios*, *Rodeo*, *Mint* and *Carp* as both subject and object, but he also plays with word association. The illusionistic rendering of these words from spilled liquids are subtle and suggestive; the word *Mint* magically appears in a puddle of mouthwash, and the word *Carp* seems to jump out of the "water". The evocative and phonetic qualities of words are an essential element of the artist's oeuvre.

In Ed Ruscha's new Mixografia prints, the artist takes a selection of Los Angeles intersections, and integrates the grid into the surface of a stone. The streets are named in a straightforward manner, but from certain angles, the texture of the handmade paper obscures the names from sight. This illusion heightens the ambiguity of these intersections as concrete places, and piques ones curiosity to embark on a future archaeological exploration to discover these contemporary cave carvings.

In these artworks, the artist subtly imbues ordinary things with ironic significance and new meaning. The perpendicular streets in *Hollywood / Vine* and *Pico / Sepulveda* elegantly mimic the rigid grid of the city, while the undulating, curving roads in *Pacific Coast Highway / Sunset Boulevard* offers an escape route from the often overwhelming chaos of urban life.

Visually, these minimalist maps are candid and alluring, yet below the surface, they comment on aspects of city life. The artist offers the viewer a haven from the hustle and bustle of Los Angeles, by nestling these busy intersections among an unadulterated landscape. At the same time, these plots symbolize the creativity, inventiveness and ingenuity of Los Angeles; a city known for its avant-garde ideas in an array of industries and disciplines, such as art and architecture, business and technology, and movies and music.