

# IN FOCUS ED RUSCHA

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THE GETTY MUSEUM PRESENTS  
*In Focus: Ed Ruscha*

At the J. Paul Getty Museum, Getty Center

April 9–September 29, 2013



6565 Fountain Ave., 1965. Ed Ruscha (American, born 1937).  
Gelatin silver print. The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.  
© Ed Ruscha

LOS ANGELES— *In Focus: Ed Ruscha*, on view at the J. Paul Getty Museum, at the Getty Center, April 9–September 29, 2013, offers a concentrated look at Ruscha's deep engagement with Los Angeles's vernacular architecture and the urban landscape. The exhibition is part of Pacific Standard Time Presents: Modern Architecture in Los Angeles, and opens simultaneously with *Overdrive: L.A. Constructs the Future, 1940–1990*, another exhibition presented at the Getty Museum as part of this regional initiative. The *Overdrive* exhibition also contains images by Ruscha.

One of the most influential American artists working today, Ed Ruscha moved to Los Angeles in 1956 and continues to live and work in the city, incorporating local architecture, streets, and even the city's attitude into paintings, prints, drawings, and photographs that are known for their graphic directness. Beginning in the 1960s, he began publishing photobooks and using photographs to document thoroughfares in the Los Angeles area.

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"Throughout his career, photography has played an important role in Ruscha's exploration of the vernacular architecture, urban landscape, and car culture of Los Angeles," commented Timothy Potts, director of the J. Paul Getty Museum. "By bringing together photographs from our collection and archival materials from the Getty Research Institute, we have been able to present a much richer understanding of Ruscha's work and process."

Highlighting an important joint acquisition of the artist's work by the J. Paul Getty Museum and the Getty Research Institute in 2011, this exhibition features a selection of vintage prints related to *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* (1963) and *Some Los Angeles Apartments* (1965), the original camera-ready maquettes for *Every Building on the Sunset Strip* (1966), and contact sheets from this documentation of the Pacific Coast Highway (1974). The exhibition is co-curated by Virginia Heckert, curator in the Department of Photographs at the Getty Museum, and John Tain, assistant curator in Collection Development at the Getty Research Institute.

"Gas stations and apartment buildings are among the quintessentially Southern Californian motifs that feature in Ruscha's work," says Heckert. "The Getty Museum's acquisition of photographs made in conjunction with his photo books of the early 1960s gives us the opportunity to share his enthusiasm for the logos, signage, and language that enliven even the most banal architecture."

Adds Tain, "What's exciting about the photography that came out of Ruscha's documentation of the Sunset Strip is that it really altered the sense of what was possible with street photography, which had always been from the viewpoint of the pedestrian. Today we have the Google Maps roving fleet of camera cars, but Ruscha was doing this kind of photography more than forty years ago."

The exhibition gives visitors the opportunity to appreciate Ruscha's photographs not as halftone reproductions in modest, mass-produced books, but as prints of the period. One of the best known images included in the exhibition is *Standard, Amarillo, Texas* (1962), which Ruscha used as the basis for his iconic oil painting *Standard Station, Amarillo, Texas* (1963). Other unpublished images from the iconic series of gasoline stations will be on view as well.

Also included are the original camera-ready maquettes and press pulls for *Every Building on the Sunset Strip*, Ruscha's fourth and arguably best-known photobook. Due to light sensitive annotations, each panel will be on view for eight weeks. The complete set of three maquettes will be on view during the first week of the exhibition only, April 9–14.

On display for the first time is a selection of contact sheets of the Pacific Coast Highway, representing a small sample of this monumental undertaking. Ruscha's

documentation captures the dramatically different landscapes of both the view west toward the Pacific Ocean and the view east toward the cliffs. The Pacific Coast Highway is just one of several streets that Ruscha has photographed over the past four and a half decades, beginning in 1965 with Sunset Boulevard.

These contact sheets are part of Ruscha's Streets of Los Angeles archive, including thousands of photographic negatives, proof sheets, contact prints, and related documents and ephemera, which was acquired by the Getty Research Institute in 2011. Nearly sixty photographs were acquired by the Getty Museum at the same time, making the Getty a preeminent resource for understanding the role of photography in Ruscha's practice.

***In Focus: Ed Ruscha*** is co-organized by the J. Paul Getty Museum and the Getty Research Institute, and features 50 works from both collections.

A related publication, *Ed Ruscha and Some Los Angeles Apartments*, with an essay by Heckert, is being published in conjunction with the exhibition.

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**The J. Paul Getty Trust** is an international cultural and philanthropic institution devoted to the visual arts that includes the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Getty Research Institute, the Getty Conservation Institute, and the Getty Foundation. The J. Paul Getty Trust and Getty programs serve a varied audience from two locations: the Getty Center in Los Angeles and the Getty Villa in Malibu.

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**Pacific Standard Time Presents: Modern Architecture in L.A.** celebrates the city's modern architectural heritage through exhibitions and programs at cultural institutions in and around L.A. starting in April 2013. Supported by grants from the Getty Foundation, Modern Architecture in L.A. is a wide-ranging look at the postwar built environment of the city as a whole, from its famous residential architecture to its vast freeway network, revealing the city's development and ongoing impact in new ways.

Additional information is available at [www.pacificstandardtimepresents.org](http://www.pacificstandardtimepresents.org).



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