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Ed Ruscha, Air, 1969

1969
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E. Ruscha

ARTIST

Ed Ruscha (b.1937)

TITLE

Air

MEDIUM

Lithograph on Copperplate Deluxe paper

DATE

1969

SIZE

17 x 24 in : 43.0 x 61.0 cm

EDITIONS

An artist's proof aside from the edition of 20, signed, inscribed and dated by the artist

PUBLISHER

Tamarind Lithography Workshop, Los Angeles

NOTES

Printed in 2 colours in 2 runs from one aluminium plate and one stone. 1. green - plate; 2. gray - stone. This impression in excellent condition.

PRINTER

John Sommers for Tamarind Lithography Workshop, Los Angeles

LITERATURE

Engberg 20

REFERENCE

A19-52

A copy of this rare work has only ever appeared at auction twice. It is a document of the inventiveness of Ruscha's printmaking in late 1960s Los Angeles at the Tamarind Lithography Workshop.

Named after the avenue on which it was located, and originally funded by the Ford Foundation, Tamarind schooled apprentice printers by inviting them on two-month fellowships. Rather than pay to make prints, the workshop's funding allowed the artists to keep the editions they made there, and to produce as many editions as possible, all leading to their certification as master printers. With no commercial concerns to worry about, this led to wild experimentation. It was to be Ruscha's most prolific engagement with the print medium to date, producing 22 colour lithographs in his time there.

"If he had not already done so with his paintings, Ruscha revealed himself with the prints of the late 1960s and early 1970s to be an extraordinary colourist, one who was open to the interpretive possibilities available with ink and the printed surface. Anchovy was glossed with a film of pearlescent ink, imparting to the blue-grey surface the silvery look of a fish. The ink for Made In California was matched perfectly to a glass of freshly-squeezed orange juice, and Mint was executed in exact peppermint pink. The richness of colour and attention to surface in both the Tamarind and Cirrus works of the period confirmed that Ruscha's prints were as painterly as were his works in any medium."

(Quoted text by Siri Engberg)



Ed Ruscha

Ed Ruscha is an American painter, printmaker and photographer, living and working in Los Angeles.

Ruscha first came to prominence there in the late 1950s with small collages that he made which were influenced by those of Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg. Soon he began to refine his collages, isolating and recombining words and images in increasingly subtle and unique ways. Words, in paintings, are often very awkward things to incorporate harmoniously and there are very few artists, notably Picasso in his cubist works, who have succeeded happily. By making single words and phrases the subject of his work, Ruscha mastered his intentions.

Because he drew upon sources from the real world and the imagery of commercial culture, Ruscha's work is associated with Pop art. In 1962 Ruscha's work was included, along with Roy Lichtenstein, Andy Warhol, Robert Dowd, Phillip Hefferton, Joe Goode, Jim Dine, and Wayne Thiebaud, in the historically important and ground-breaking New Painting of Common Objects, curated by Walter Hopps at the Pasadena Art Museum. This show historically is considered one of the first Pop art exhibitions in America.

Ruscha had his first solo exhibition in 1963 at the Ferus Gallery in Los Angeles. In 1966, Ruscha was included in Los Angeles Now at the Robert Fraser Gallery in London, his first European exhibition. Ruscha joined the influential Leo Castelli Gallery in New York in 1970 and had his first solo exhibition there in 1973. Also in 1970 Ruscha represented the United States at the Venice Biennale as part of a survey of American printmaking with an on-site workshop. He constructed Chocolate Room, a visual and sensory experience where the visitor saw 360 pieces of paper permeated with chocolate and hung on the gallery walls. The pavilion in Venice smelled like a chocolate factory. He had begun to use unconventional materials in his graphic work of

that period: he drew with gunpowder and painted and printed with foodstuffs and with a variety of organic substances such as blood and the medicine Pepto-Bismol.

He was also well known for the books he published of his series of deadpan photographs. Such work was influential for the development of conceptual art, although Ruscha's pieces have a characteristic low-key humour.

By the 1980s Ruscha's work was characterised by a further exploration of the image, painting mountain ranges and ships emphasising or partly obscuring a word or evocation of a phrase: all references and cross-references to Hollywood, the American brand and global popular culture.

In 2001, the Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts, a branch of Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, acquired the entire archive of Ruscha's 325 prints and 800 working proofs. The museum bought the archive and negotiated for impressions of future prints for \$10 million, with funds provided by San Francisco philanthropist Phyllis Wattis. Another major collection of Ruscha's prints was compiled by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. In 2003, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles acquired the Chocolate Room, then worth about \$1.5 million. In 2004, the Whitney Museum acquired more than 300 photographs through a purchase and gift from the artist, making it the principal repository of Ruscha's photographic oeuvre. Ruscha is represented by 33 of his works in the permanent collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art owns 25 important Ruscha paintings, works on paper, and photographs; and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden has 21 Ruschas in its permanent collection. Private collections holding substantial numbers of Ruscha's work include the Broad Collection the UBS Art Collection and the Achenbach Foundation.



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