

GAGOSIAN



ED RUSCHA

Paintings

November 14, 2020–January 23, 2021
541 West 24th Street, New York

Ed Ruscha, *Hardscrabble*, 2020, acrylic on canvas, 32 × 48 inches (81.3 × 122 cm) © Ed Ruscha. Photo: Paul Ruscha

November 11, 2020

Deterioration is a fertile area to explore.
—Ed Ruscha

Gagosian is pleased to present an exhibition of new paintings by Ed Ruscha.

Since the 1960s, Ruscha has created a distinctive and ever-expanding lexicon of signs, symbols, images, and words drawn from vernacular America. His visual utterances, sounds, and concepts—such as the roadside gas station or the word “OOF”—have become embedded in the American ethos. He has presented recurring images—the American flag, mountains, books, and words—that are suggestive yet never didactic, and the development of these images over the course of his illustrious career exemplifies the wry refinement and subtlety with which he speaks through painting.

In these new paintings, Ruscha has chosen to revisit the flag, the mountain, and the tire. Flags entered Ruscha's visual vocabulary between 1985 and 1987, rippling in the breeze over dramatic sunsets or triumphant blue skies, offset with subtle warning cues of black bars resembling censor strips. The motif returned in *OUR FLAG* (2017)—currently on view at the Brooklyn Museum, which served as a polling site for the November election—where it disintegrated into shreds set against a near-black sky. The flag becomes newly distorted in *RIPPLING FLAG* (2020), this time abnormally widened to extend past the right-side frame, its flowing surface creating twisted shapes and shadows over the red and white stripes. In *Top of Flag* (2020), only a fraction of the standard is visible at the bottom of the canvas, surrounded by a gradation of shadow, almost as though the flag were a setting sun or a dimming spotlight on a stage.

In new mountain paintings, Ruscha presents one of his archetypal snowy ranges, but inverts one of the peaks so that it appears to descend from the sky. A shredded tire tread, or “gator,” which Ruscha first referred to in his series of *Psycho Spaghetti Western* paintings, hovers over a barren, red-skied landscape in *Hardscrabble* (2020). These tire shreds also appeared in *Blue Collar Tires* (1992), which formed part of the *Course of Empire* series, Ruscha's contribution for the American Pavilion at the Biennale di Venezia in 2005. This was titled directly after Thomas Cole's famous painting cycle (1834–36) depicting the same landscape over time as it is developed from its pristine natural state, to fall, finally—like Ruscha's flags—into a state of disrepair and deterioration.

A fully illustrated catalogue, with an essay by writer Tom McCarthy, will accompany the exhibition.

Ed Ruscha was born in 1937 in Omaha, Nebraska, and lives and works in Los Angeles. His work is collected by museums worldwide. Exhibitions include *Fifty Years of Painting*, Haus der Kunst, Munich (2010, traveled to Moderna Museet, Stockholm, through 2010); *Standard*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2012–13, traveled to Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA, through 2013); *Los Angeles Apartments*, Kunstmuseum Basel (2013); *In Focus: Ed Ruscha*, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles (2013); 13th Biennale de Lyon, France (2015); *Ed Ruscha and the Great American West*, de Young Museum, San Francisco (2016); *Course of Empire*, National Gallery, London (2018); *Double Americanisms*, Secession, Vienna (2018–19); and *ARTIST ROOMS: Ed Ruscha*, Tate Modern, London (2019–21).

#EdRuscha

Press

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