

GAGOSIAN



ED RUSCHA

Dedication Stones

July 16–September 26, 2021

Hindergässli 1, Saanen, Switzerland

Ed Ruscha, *XXX (Dedicated to a Jug of Whiskey)*, 2021, acrylic and pencil on museum board, 15 × 20 inches (38.1 × 50.8 cm) © Ed Ruscha

I'm interested in glorifying something that we in the world would say doesn't deserve being glorified. Something that's forgotten, focused on as though it were some sort of sacred object.

—Ed Ruscha

Gagosian is pleased to present *Dedication Stones*, a special exhibition of new drawings by Ed Ruscha in Saanen, Switzerland.

In an oeuvre spanning more than fifty years, Ruscha employs a distinctively American lexicon of images, words, and signs in works across a broad range of mediums. Presenting a litany of familiar icons including snow-capped mountains and the American flag, he applies a wry verbal and visual wit to his chosen subjects, exploring the frequent disconnect between ideas and their expression, and celebrating the beauty of what he calls “everyday noise.”

In each of the *Dedication Stones* drawings, Ruscha renders a different short word or symbol containing the letter *x*, which for him represents the ultimate variable, an endlessly adaptable surrogate for other ideas. It is also a literal component of the various terms and names he illustrates —*Bix*, *Mix*, *Fix*, *Tax*, and so on—the use of similar-sounding words recalling Ruscha's screen-print

portfolio *News, Mews, Pews, Brews, Stews & Dues* (1970). Viewed and read sequentially, the words also prompt a staccato enunciation that begins to supersede their established meanings.

But while Ruscha engages with the words as abstract lingual units, their cultural associations ultimately remain in play; each drawing bears a subtitle that places its subject in a specific context. Often, these display the artist's droll sense of humor—thus *Fix (Dedicated to the 1919 World Series)* references the notorious baseball game-rigging scandal; *XXX (Dedicated to a Jug of Whiskey)* alludes to the traditional marker of triple distillation on containers of moonshine; and *Xit (Dedicated to Ways Out)* (all 2021) employs a deliberate misspelling.

At the same time, the gray tonality, stippled texture, classical serif fonts, and trompe l'oeil pins of the drawings suggest chiseled stone, galvanizing an association with monuments and tombstones—even as their 'torn' edges seem to depict paper surfaces. Beyond simply paying tribute, then, they might also be read as commemorating or presaging the demise of their subjects; while some works feature living people and extant places, among them are also legendary figures of the past, such as the great jazz trumpet player Bix Beiderbecke and the racing car driver Jacky Ickx.

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); *Tate ARTIST ROOMS: Ed Ruscha*, Tate Modern, London (2019–21), and *OKLA*, Oklahoma Contemporary, Oklahoma City (2021).

#EdRuscha

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