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Ed Ruscha, Hollywood, 1968

ARTIST

Ed Ruscha (b.1937)

TITLE

Hollywood

MEDIUM

Screenprint on white paper

DATE

1968

SIZE

17 1/2 x 44 7/16 in : 44.5 x 112.9 cm

EDITIONS

From the edition of 100, signed, dated and numbered by the artist

PUBLISHER

Published by the artist

PRINTER

Printed by the artist

NOTES

8 colours printed in 4 runs from 4 screens: 1. Yellow, Orange, Purple, Mauve (split fountain); 2. Dark brown - screen; 3. Brown, Yellow (split fountain) - screen; 4. Yellow - screen

LITERATURE

Engberg 7

REFERENCE

AC22-02

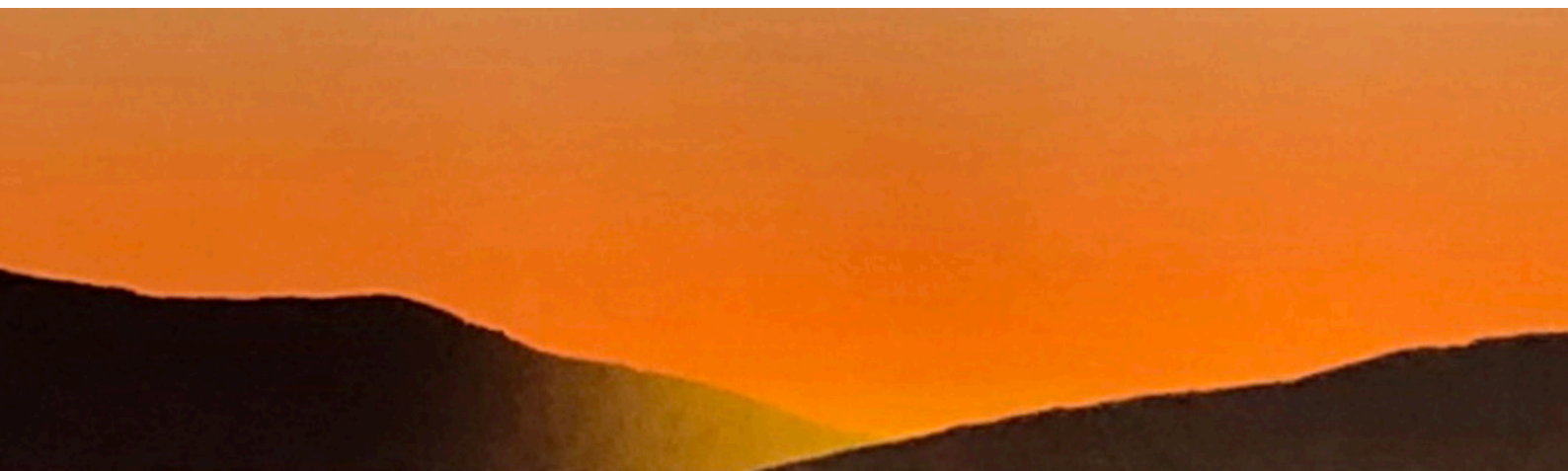
Hollywood was the first screenprint in colours which Ruscha printed and published by himself, and he did so through a process of trial-and-error. Two years previously, in 1966, he had produced Standard Station with the printer Art Krebs and had, no-doubt, felt emboldened by the experience.

“... (he recalls that he rigged a clothes-line system on which to hang the drying prints, only to return to the studio the following day to find they had fallen on the floor). Revisiting the screenprint medium, Ruscha worked as he had in the Standard Station prints, blending inks directly on the screen to create a gradation of colour. Because each print had a slightly different mixture of inks, the proofs that resulted often contained oddities and mistakes that the artist found intriguing and would document, tongue in check, along with the usual trial proofs and artist’s proofs. A “UFO” proof was created when a foreign object had been caught in the squeegee, causing a skip in the field of colour that was the sky. A “Lake Amarillo” proof was one on which the yellow ink pooled in the area of the image just beneath the dark hills, giving the appearance of a body of water reflecting the last light of day. Hollywood was an overtly panoramic print, emphasizing Ruscha’s view that horizontality and landscape – in this case the Hollywood hills as well as the three-syllable (read: long) word “Hollywood” – can be seen as synonymous notions. As he did in the painting of the same name, the artist explores the famous horizon by depicting

the Hollywood sign in full view, perched on the crest of the hillside rather than nestled mid-slope, as it actually appears. The pop-up frontality of the image, rendered as a flat façade, presaged Ruscha’s attraction to the silhouette, which was to figure strongly in his work of the 1980s. Just as the word “Standard” labels the most pedestrian of architectural structures in the 1966 print and comments on the banality of the subject matter, the heraldic “Hollywood” emblazoned on a glowing amber sky heightens the romanticized associations that accompany that particular part of Los Angeles and its main industry. (“Hollywood is a verb,” announced a 1979 Ruscha pastel.) The image was a favourite of the artist’s, one he would revisit in several more screenprints and lithographs the following year.”

Inspiration for the presentation of the Hollywood sign in this way may have come from a still from a movie filmed in Panavision and, in common with many of his first explorations in imagery relating to the film industry, was very much considered from a viewer-oriented perspective.

The vivid colouring of this example is a result of a unique mix of the four colours used in the split-fountain process for the background screen: yellow, orange, purple and mauve.



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 and the UBS Art Collection.



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