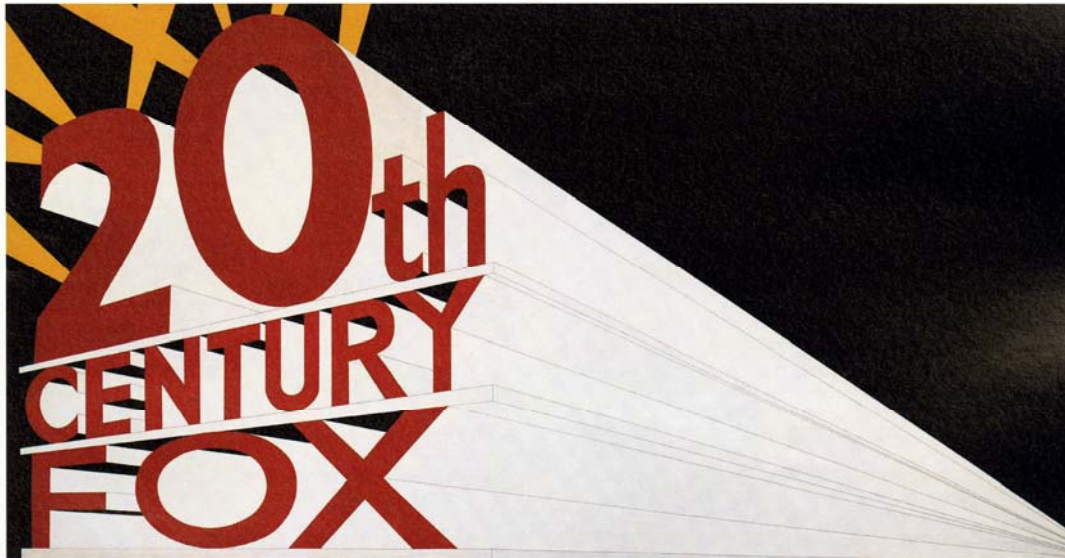


GAGOSIAN GALLERY

DATEBOOK

OCTOBER 2009 THIS MONTH'S CULTURAL AGENDA

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IN RETROSPECT ED RUSCHA

The first retrospective to focus exclusively on the iconic canvases of the 72-year-old Los Angeles-based artist, "Ed Ruscha: Fifty Years of Painting," on view at London's Hayward Gallery from October 14 through January 10, sheds light on his influences, from comics to graphic design to hitchhiking. Reached at his L.A. studio, the multi-talented Ruscha, who has made everything from artist's books and drawings to films and photographs, says that, yes, he does consider himself primarily a painter, but he quickly adds, "A painter can be anybody who wants to do anything. I'm not a traditionalist." Here he relates what motivated some of the works in the show, which travels next year to the Haus der Kunst, in Munich, and the Moderna Museet, in Stockholm.

-Sarah Douglas



1962
† Large Trademark with
Eight Spotlights

↓ Annie
This typeface, which also appears in my 1961 painting *Boss*, recalls everything that I responded to as a child in relation to the comic books I read. Comic books were a hot issue for me when I was growing up, and for a brief moment I thought I wanted to be a cartoonist, but I never really pursued it. I wanted the word to be oversized, and overwhelming, and to kind of knock you off your feet.



Continued →

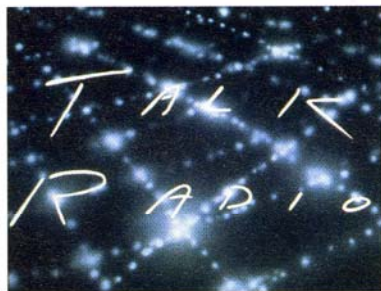
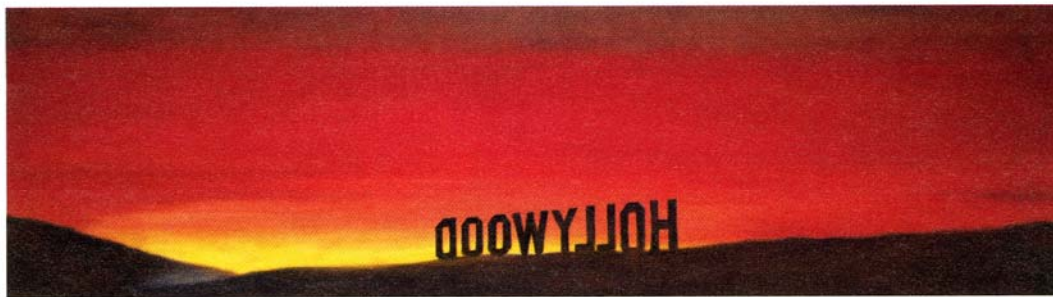


1966

↑ *Standard Station* When I was photographing gasoline stations, I noticed they were like boxes with words on them, and that seems to be what I was after then. With *Standard Station* and the 20th Century Fox image [*Large Trademark with Eight Spotlights*, 1962] I had painted a few years earlier, I was after a zoom effect. I also wanted the sense that they were making music—blaring trumpets or announcing something.

1977

↓ *Back of Hollywood* I wasn't really inspired by anybody doing landscapes. I'm not part of any landscape tradition. My approach to this kind of vista came out of traveling on highways—hitchhiking and driving. The horizontal began to affect me, and I could see myself doing these landscapes, or nods to landscapes, but I never looked at them as landscapes. They were just pictures.



1988

↑ *Talk Radio* When I would fly into Los Angeles at night, the city was like a twinkling wonderland, and it also held an answer to some fable or dream I was after. I began using it as a background, and then I realized how important backgrounds really are. So a lot of my paintings are based on backgrounds, and the relationship between background and foreground.

2003

↑ *The Old Tech-Chem Building* I don't really have a social agenda. Even paintings like this one go back into the world of abstraction. They show boxes with words on them, and the boxes in this case happen to be buildings. I just end up making these pictures that I hope are somehow suggestive.