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Ed Ruscha's Lofty 'Mountain Prints' at Gagosian Gallery Geneva

Nicholas Forrest



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Commenting on his “Mountain” works, Ed Ruscha has said: “I had a notion to make pictures by using words and presenting them in some way and it seemed like a mountain was an archetypal stage set. It was a perfect foil for whatever was happening in the foreground, renowned”

More than ten years after the original motif appeared in Ruscha’s distinctive “Mountain” paintings, Gagosian is presenting the first exhibition devoted exclusively to American artist Ed Ruscha’s “Mountain Prints” at its Geneva gallery until May 28.

Screenprints, lithographs, and etchings have been a key part of Ruscha’s oeuvre since 1960, following an apprenticeship with Saul Marks at Plantin Press in Los Angeles which he began in 1958 while attending Chouinard Art Institute (now CalArts).

In typical Ruscha style, the “Mountain Prints” juxtapose images with text, in this case cryptic and banal phrases in white letters precisely and intuitively superimposed over stock images of mountainous landscape scenes in ways that expose Ruscha’s masterly command of content and form.

The exhibition at Gogosian includes both works from the numbered edition as well as color trial, separation, and cancellation proofs produced between 2010 and 2015 at Hamilton Press, giving a rare insight into the developmental process of Ruscha's experiments in the print medium.

According to Gagosian, "'Mountain Prints' suggests the ways in which the open exchange of skills and insights has impacted his punchy compositions," while "subtle mutations between prints recount the active and constant negotiation between artist and printer, author and craftsman."

In July 2016, the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco will open a major solo exhibition of Ed Ruscha at the de Young. "Ed Ruscha and the Great American West" will feature more than 80 works spanning the artist's career, exploring his attachments to the sights and scenes of the iconic landscape.