



Ruscha, 1963
Photograph: Joe Goode

[Ed Ruscha artist website](#)

[Ruscha at Gagosian Gallery](#)

[Ruscha at MoMA](#)

“I have always felt attracted to anything that had to do with that phenomenon of people speaking to each other...the printed page and books began--I began to see not so much the content of it, but the curiosity of the thing itself,” Ruscha reflected in an [oral history](#) with the Smithsonian Archives of American Art recorded in 1980-81. “I visually took that on as material...I felt newspapers, magazines, books, words, to be more meaningful than what some damn oil painter was doing. So I suppose it developed itself from that, into the idea of questioning the printed word.”

Ruscha spoke with [Believer Magazine](#) in 2006 about his book of photography, *Then & Now*, the attraction to and inspiration derived from LA, Pop art, and language. “it’s not my job to communicate with people. A picture is made in a solitary spot. Trying to reach people with a well-defined message is almost impossible, and unnecessary. So various interpretations of a single word are welcome...That’s the nature of art.”

“It’s not important to me for people to see that way I see things because I don’t even know how I see things. I just produce things that I feel have to be made official. I just make a picture and I have to satisfy myself with this and hope someone can derive something from it,” Ruscha reflected during [an interview in his LA studio in 2016](#) about becoming a professional artist and finding his personal aesthetic in an art world that adores abstraction.

[San Francisco’s de Young Museum](#) highlighted Ruscha’s relationship and fascination with American landscapes in 2016 with nearly 100 photographs, lithographs, and archival publications dating from the 1970s. Fellow LA-based artist Sterling Ruby talked with Ruscha for [Interview Magazine](#) about the exhibition, art school, and his practice.

“I’ve got this language that I’m speaking, that maybe it’s got some potential to it that I’ll increase and keep addressing, visiting back...the flatness of all this landscape between California and Oklahoma began to infect my work, I could see it coming at me,” Ruscha told Denmark’s [Louisiana Museum of Art](#) in a video interview in association with his [2018 exhibition, Very](#), which took a close look at Ruscha’s technical and graphic innovations from 1960 onward in his paintings, photography, and artist books.

[The National Gallery](#), London, showcased Ruscha’s 2005 Venice Biennale cycle [The Course of Empire](#) in 2018, which played off Thomas Cole’s 1833-36 cycle of the same name. [Ruscha discusses his relationship with the original paintings](#) and their legacy in an interview with the Gagosian Gallery and MET curator Elizabeth Kornhauser.

Ruscha spoke of his influences inside and outside of the art world in [an artist talk](#) at the Tate Modern in 2019, in conjunction with the opening of his [Artist Rooms exhibition](#) exploring the range of techniques Ruscha used in paintings, photography, and book making over the course of his sixty-year career. Ruscha also talked about his intuitive process in [a quick-fire interview](#) with the Tate.

[Oklahoma Contemporary Art](#) will feature Ruscha for his first solo exhibition in his home state in 2021.



Ruscha, 2018
Photograph: Manfredi Gioacchini



Edward Ruscha (American, b. 1937)

Wavy Robot, 1975

Gunpowder on paper

Private Collection; L2019:133.1

Discussing his “word” paintings and drawings, California artist Ed Ruscha says, “I like the idea of a word becoming a picture, almost leaving its body, then coming back and becoming a word again.”

Ruscha’s prolific oeuvre explores a range of mediums within twentieth-century art. Central to his output is the interrogation of language.

Beginning with his formative *Ribbon Word* series in the 1960s, Ruscha has explored the relationship between words and meaning in works on paper that blur the surreal with the conceptual. Each installment presents a word floating in ambiguous space, rendered in curvy script with the appearance of coiled ribbons. Ruscha accomplished the illusion with a unique *trompe l’oeil* (“fool the eye”) technique that employs gunpowder refined with water as an artistic medium. Like **Wavy Robot**, Ruscha’s word drawings expose language as a malleable object with an arbitrary relationship to the material world.

On view October 7 – 25, 2020