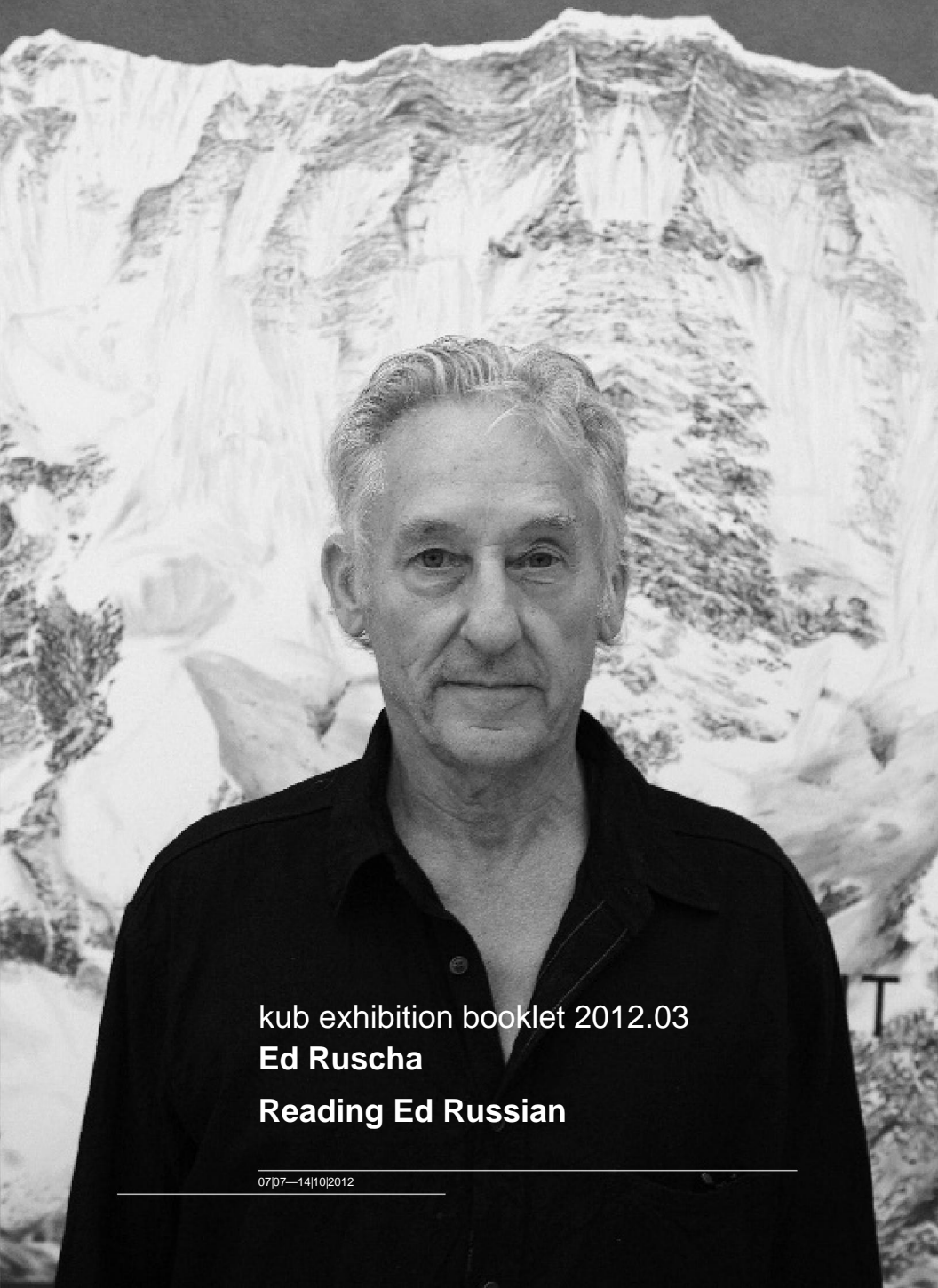


# Kunsthhaus Bregenz



kub exhibition booklet 2012.03

**Ed Ruscha**

**Reading Ed Russian**

I grew up in Oklahoma, in a world  
where things went much more slowly,  
and I felt isolated there.

But being on the highway,  
hitchhiking or driving anywhere, the  
adventure of seeing the country - that  
was the most important  
experience.

You are guided by this optimistic idea that  
greater things are out there.

Ed Ruscha  
in an interview  
July 6, 2012

cube 2012.03

**Ed Ruscha**

**Reading Ed Russian**

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Ed Ruscha is one of the best-known artists of his generation. At the end of the 1950s he decided against intellectual New York and to study art in Los Angeles. His work was heavily influenced by the realities of this expanding and backdrop-like city in the American West.

It refers to the countless advertising messages and oversized company logos on the side of the road in the metropolis as well as the feeling of experiencing a city from the car – “driving past”, so to speak. Ruscha works in a wide variety of areas

Media: artist books, drawings, prints, photographs and paintings.

It is difficult to assign his work to a specific style –  
it oscillates between pop art and conceptual art and continues to reinvent itself to this day. An important constant is the use of writing - in the form of print media or painted on the canvas like a red thread running through his oeuvre.  
– extending from the beginning of his career to date

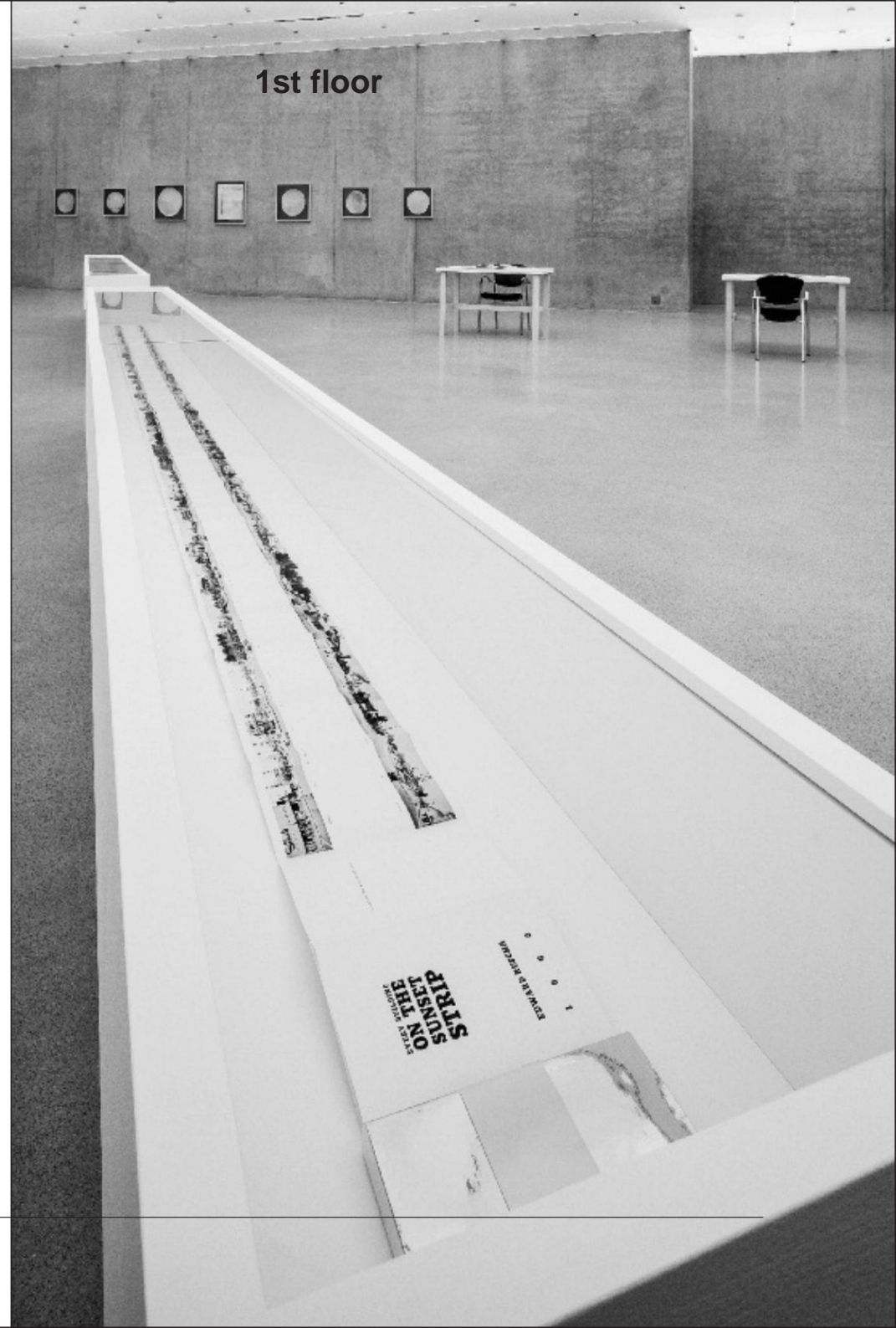
After numerous retrospectives in recent years, most of which have focused on his paintings, Ed Ruscha is presenting a wide range of his works in the kub for the first time, which deal explicitly with the book or the act of »reading«.

## Ground floor

*miracle*, 1975

16 mm film, colour, optical sound,  
28 minutes

The film *miracle* from 1975 marks the unusual start of the exhibition on the ground floor. The main actor is a red Ford Mustang, which becomes a fetish and excessive research object for its owner. The mechanic repairs the vehicle with the precision of a scientist: consulting experts, poring over books, oblivious to the real world around him.





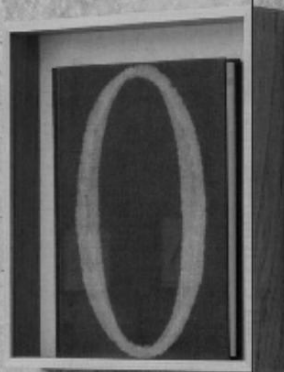
The thematic focus of the exhibition announced in the title *Reading Ed Ruscha* is already fulfilled on the first floor : all of Ruscha's artist books, which have meanwhile become legendary, are on display together with other book objects.

Parallel to his studies, Ruscha worked as a sign painter and for advertising agencies. He later used the layout methods and printing techniques he learned for his own publications. One book, for example, shows photos of gas stations he passed on the way from his Los Angeles home to his family's in Oklahoma (*twentysix gasoline stations*, 1962). In another book, empty parking lots are just as worthy of being illustrated, which now provide attractive graphic grids due to the chosen helicopter perspective (*thirtyfour parking lots*, 1967). *Hard light* (1978) , created in collaboration with Lawrence Weiner, or the *royal road test* (1967), in contrast to this documentary approach, appear more as a continuous photo story. Another artist's book shows all the houses on Sunset Boulevard (*every building on the sunset strip*, 1966), which were meticulously photographed from a moving car at a specific time interval. The buildings on Hollywood Boulevard (*then and now*, 2005) are also captured using a similar technique: however, there are 31 years between the two panorama views. Ruscha's access to Jack Kerouac's cult book *On the Road* is similarly delayed . The embossed photographs of car parts, jazz music, drugs and

Fast food evokes a drive through the American 1950s West.





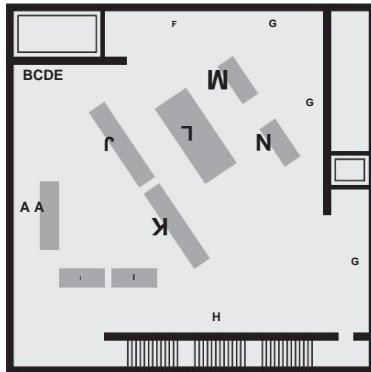


Another special attraction of the exhibition is the large selection of book objects that are otherwise rarely presented. In this work cycle, the artist writes or bleaches whole words (*holy bible*, 2005) but also individual letters (*O-Books*) into the covers of old books. These retain their object status, but with this intervention on canvas they become image carriers again, whose new titles are in exciting relation to the interior.

This happens with relish, for example, when Ruscha places the signet »End« (the *end*, 1992), familiar from Hollywood films, on the cover of an atlas. The relationship between text and image, between sign and signified, is just as poetically staged in the photographs selected for this floor (including *single book flat*, 2001).

In the group of works of the round script images on animal skin, Ruscha deals with the scandalous book by James Frey *The Final Testament of the Holy Bible*. A protagonist of the novel speaking in double negations is quoted in the text. Each assertion of the selected phrases is thereby erased at the same time in terms of content.

## 1st floor



G  
*twins (diptych)*, 2009  
*eat hot lead*, 2002  
*the brimming cup*, 1992  
S, 2000  
*sea of desire*, 1992  
O, 1997  
S, 1993  
*mama says knock you out*, 2002  
O, 1993  
*the end*, 2005  
C, 2001  
*nerve*, 1992  
*baby jet*, 2010  
O, 1997  
*if*, 1992  
O, 1993  
*holy bible*, 2005  
M, 2001  
*the end*, 1992

A

*on the road*, 2009 51

framed pages from an artist's book of the novel by  
Jack Kerouac,  
Design by Ed Ruscha

B

*cup of gold*, 2008

C

*books*, 1966

D

*of mice and men*, 2008

E

*history*, 2005

F

*raggedy book on slant*, 2001

*single book on slant*, 2001

*three books on slant*, 2001

*gilt book on slant*, 2001

*single book flat*, 2001

5 photographs from the portfolio books

H

*they couldn't do no better*, 2011 *she ain't old  
enough...*, 2011 *i hadn't done no  
laundry*, 2011

*in the beginning*, 2011 *didn't*

*do nothing...*, 2011 *there wasn't*

*no pearly gates*, 2011

*went to sleep*, 2011

Acrylic paint on vellum

I

*then and now*, 2005

Hollywood Boulevard 1973–2004

J

*every building on the sunset strip*, 1966

K

*stains*, 1969

This fold in the middle and the  
Book page in its rectangular shape.  
It's a method of storing  
things by folding them.

It is a life principle that is  
part of my art.

Ed Ruscha  
in an interview  
July 6, 2012

L

*various small fires*, 1964 *twentysix*

*gasoline stations*, 1962 *some los angeles*

*apartments*, 1965 *thirtyfour parking lots*, 1967

*royal road test*, 1967 *business cards*,

1968 *nine swimming pools*,

1968 *crackers*, 1969

*babycakes*, 1970

M

*oh / no*, 2008

*me and the*, 2002

Book objects bound in fabric with silver-  
gilt top and  
Undercut and airbrushed text on the front  
cut

N

*oh no*, 2011

*pep*, 2011

*info*, 2012

Hand-engraved intaglio on gilt book  
front edge

*real estate opportunities*, 1970

*a few palm trees*, 1971

*records*, 1971

*dutch details*, 1971

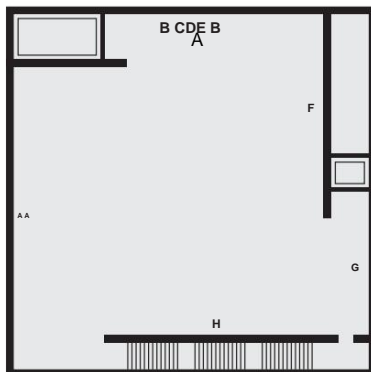
*colored people*, 1972

*hard light*, 1978





## 2nd Floor



A  
*do as i say or..., 1997 i  
might just act ugly if you get  
up on that stand and say something  
unpleasant to my ears, 1997  
you talk you get killed, 1994 i can't  
take it no more, 2000 stick up don't  
move smile, 2001  
want to get to know  
my boiling point?, 1997  
hi there, my old friend, 1994  
do not let the information  
be known to any person  
or you die, 1996  
trouble your way if you insist  
on ratting, 1997 if i  
was you i'd do just like i tell you  
to do, 1994  
note we have already got rid of  
several like you – one was found  
in river just recently, 1996 i'm going  
to leave more notes and  
i'm going to kick more ass, 1999  
you and i are in disagreement, 1997 when i'm  
released i'm smoking  
a straight line to you – got me?, 1997 say yes to  
our demands or else, 1999 this no joke im after  
you stupid  
punk, 1997  
better get your ass some protection,  
1997  
in god we trust, 1994  
you dirty rotten bitch, 1997  
you cross me i wanna see blood, 1997  
little snitches like you end up in  
dumpsters all across town, 1997*

Whether it is about censor bars  
or blocks, everything is  
possible  
down to this one thing I'm struggling  
with, and that's the  
rectangle.

Ed Ruscha  
at a lecture in the kub July  
7, 2012

F  
*atlas, 2002  
notes book, 2004  
index, 2002  
bible, 2002  
manual, 2002  
standards and norms, 2007*

G  
*the right people, 2011  
stock market technique, numbers 1 & 2,  
2002  
those other people, 2011*

H  
*tulsa slut open book, 2002 naive  
evian open book, 2003  
no son open book, 2003  
open book with worm holes, 2005  
open book with worm holes #2, 2005  
starbrats open book, 2003  
stratotarts open book, 2003  
we few open book, 2003*

B  
*it's payback time, 2011  
your a dead man, 2001 be  
careful else we be bangin' on you –  
you hear me?, 2001 you  
will eat hot lead, 2001 noose around  
your neck, 2001 do as told or suffer,  
2011 C  
  
nothing, 1994  
D  
your space on building, 2006  
...  
your space gravure, 2006*



## 3rd floor

On the third floor, Ed Ruscha collects his latest group of works of large-format canvas paintings, each of which shows an open book with empty double pages. In the juxtaposition of these works, an aging process becomes clear.

While the paper is still white and smooth in the first book, the illusionistic painting increasingly yellows and deforms the material. Duchamp's idea of a work of art that, like his *Large Glass*, can already gather dust even in its infancy seems to be reflected in a tongue-in-cheek manner.

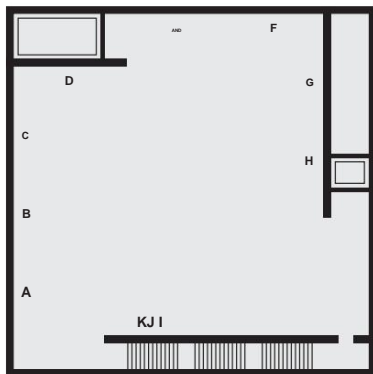
Old books fascinate me.  
When I see a book infested  
with mold  
and mold stains, I feel a  
tingling sensation.

Ed Ruscha  
in an interview  
July 6, 2012

The book works are supplemented by two prominent loans, *tulsa slut* (2002) from the New York Museum of Modern Art and *Never Odd or Even* (2001) from the Broad Collection in Los Angeles. The presentation of these images is exemplary for Ruscha's joyfully playful exploration of the principles of mirroring text and image. Both *tulsa slut* and *Never Odd or Even* show a lettering against the background of a symmetrically marbled landscape depiction like a cane, the meaning of which remains the same from both reading directions. Image and text also revolve around the principles of the feminine and masculine.

*A, B and C* (1987) refer to the beginning and thus the basic constants of our writing. At the same time, the typography, which is reminiscent of the bars in the *cityscape*, now appears digitized and thus marks the beginning of the computer age. The artist translates the motif of the beginning and end, which also has a historical appeal in the semicircle of the lunette art, into the depiction of the interaction of white and black in the two panels *yardstick*, (left) and *yardstick*, (right). Ruscha makes it clear that a purely two-dimensional measurement of the sky - and thus of reality - can only fail.

## 3rd floor



- A  
*old book back then, 2011*
- B  
*old book today, 2011–2012*
- C  
*old book with wormholes, 2012*
- D  
*gilded, marbled and foibled,  
2011–2012*
- E  
*Never Odd or Even, 2001*
- F  
*tulsa slut, 2002*
- G  
*yardstick,(left), 1985–1987*
- H  
*yardstick,(right), 1985–1987*
- I  
*A, 1987*
- J  
*B, 1987*
- K  
*C, 1987*

The things that happen in between are  
fascinating.

I like to think that my  
entire life is made up of trying  
to stay in the middle.

Ed Ruscha  
in an interview  
July 6, 2012

Edward Ruscha, born in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1937, went to Los Angeles in 1956 to study at the Chouinard Art Institute. Ruscha's work has been recognized in numerous museum retrospectives worldwide, including the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in 1982, the Center Georges Pompidou, Paris, in 1989, and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC, in 2000.

Recent solo exhibitions include: Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas and The Hammer Museum in Los Angeles (2011); Moderna Museet, Stockholm (2010); Hayward Gallery, London, House of Art, Munich (2009); Galerie Nationale du Jeu de Paume, Paris (2006); The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, The National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Museo Nazionale delle Arti del xxi Secolo, Rome, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh (2004); Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid (2002).

Ed Ruscha represented the United States of America 2005 at the 51st Venice Biennale.

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Tuesday to Sunday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. | Thursday 10 am — 9 pm

7 July to 2 September daily 10 am — 8 pm | Box office dw-433

Assumption Day, August 15, 10 a.m. — 8 p.m



### entrance fees

Adults 9 euros | Concessions €6.50

Free admission for children and young people up to the age of 19

Annual pass 36 euros | Annual ticket reduced 26,- eur

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EUR 6.50 per person | Guided tours for groups of 15 people or more per person EUR 6

Workshop for children or children's art on Saturday 4.50 eur

### Information and registration for guided tours

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