

Crown Point Press Release

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EXPRESSIONS OF LANGUAGE

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Ed Ruscha, *All Fall Down #1-4*, 2026

Crown Point Press presents *Expressions of Language*, a group exhibition exploring how written text in its various forms, both abstract and literal, serves as a bridge between the verbal and visual. Text in art can shape stories, express ideas, or function as a graphic element, conveying a wide array of meanings in which both the serious and the absurd can exist. The exhibition features Ed Ruscha's newly completed portfolio of four color etchings, *All Fall Down #1-4*, alongside earlier prints by Ruscha. Also on view in the gallery are etchings by Robert Barry, Iain Baxter, Marcel Dzama, Hamish Fulton, Jacqueline Humphries, Matt Mullican, Pat Steir, Catherine Wagner, William T. Wiley, and Fred Wilson.

From the windows of his Los Angeles studio in the 1960s, Ed Ruscha would see the Hollywood sign every day. Since then, the sign has appeared frequently in his work, but these new prints tell a markedly different story. Completed in the Crown Point studio in January, *All Fall Down #1-4* depicts the gradual decay of the iconic sign in Beverly Hills, California. The imagery speaks for itself and is characteristic of Ruscha's longstanding engagement with the use of language as a way to elevate the written word to its own substantive subject. Through the evolution of the four images, the sign becomes increasingly fragmented and difficult to recognize. In the final print, the structure is nearly illegible, as if Ruscha were rolling the end credits, the letters having fully eroded into the forms of the landscape. The blue aquatint background and surrounding mountains also fade, leaving the last etching nearly black and white unless closely examined. The new series, *All Fall Down #1-4*, slyly suggests that the popular ideal of the "California Dream" may actually be a mirage, a façade on the verge of crumbling into the desert.

Jacqueline Humphries's :) :) and ;):), two etchings created at Crown Point in 2015, similarly rely on symbols to subtly convey meaning. Using emojis and emoticons, Humphries elicits emotional responses in an understated yet immediate way. Seen today, these works feel especially of the moment. "Emojis and emoticons (and sometimes just dots) in this body of work are multiplied. Humphries layers rows of them over bigger, looser, less controlled marks. Something is going on behind them, something completely different, a messy other world with its own life." (Humphries Overview, 2015)

Catherine Wagner's work may not initially appear to align with *Expressions of Language*, yet her 2021 visit to the Crown Point studio was deeply informed by language. "Working as a conceptual artist through the medium of photography, Wagner acts as a social anthropologist, documenting, taking inventory, and categorizing places and things. She is interested in our collective history, the physical evidence of time's passage, and how culture is revealed through language and architecture." (Wagner Overview, 2022) In her photogravure *Spatial Verbs*, groups of wood blocks suggest a set of foundational elements—a kind of visual syntax. Together, the nine images that comprise the whole work are evocative of a language constructed from basic forms, offering an alternative mode of communication.

Each artist in *Expressions of Language* approaches the concept of language from a distinct perspective, revealing the many ways text as an image, structure, or metaphor can be formed or implied. *Expressions of Language* is on view in the Crown Point Gallery January 29 - March 20, 2025. The gallery is open Monday through Friday, 9AM - 5PM.