

Crown Point Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Ed Ruscha

About Words

April 4 – June 2, 2023



Castiron Calendar, 2023. Color direct gravure printed in an edition of 40.
Sheet size: 26-1/4 x 42"

"I like the tension of having a combination of words or a word in front of something that is also lively in itself."

Ed Ruscha

Crown Point Press announces the release of *Castiron Calendar*, a new etching by Ed Ruscha. It is featured in a group exhibition, *About Words*, that includes eleven of Ruscha's etchings made between 2006 and 2023 along with a selection of prints made between 1977 and 2019 by Robert Barry, Iain Baxter, Steve Reich, Pat Steir and William T. Wiley. Each artist uses words as imagery to explore language and meaning visually.

Ed Ruscha throughout his career has used words as subject matter. These "non-verbal communications," as he describes them, are set against textured backgrounds that act as stage sets or backdrops. In his new print, *Castiron Calendar*, Ruscha created the letters in his iconic font by using a stencil. The two words, one stacked on top of the other, pop out from a dark background. The words play against each other: "calendar" marks the passage of time, while "cast iron," in its heaviness and solidity, endures. The print mixes visual formality with playful language, and resonates in meaning and in presentation.

Sign in a Sandstorm, *Sign in a Rainstorm*, and *Sign in a Mudstorm* are three prints Ruscha created in 2021. Their titles play against the words in the signs. "City Limits" is the sign in *Sign in a Mudstorm*; "Sea Level" is in *Sign in a Rainstorm*. In each of these prints, the meaning between the imagery and the title is existential. Three prints from 2014 (*Real Deal*, *Rain Gain*, and *Zoot Suit*) are more direct and straightforward. The title is the subject, the letters (also created using stencils) rise and fall in scale against blue, gray and pinkish-red backgrounds. "These prints came out of pencil sketches resembling standing soldiers or skinny skyscrapers. The technical side was influenced by the Joan Miro playbook of open bite intaglio. The figures "bleed: excess ink to define the images," Ed Ruscha has said.

Pat Steir's 1977 drypoint, *Marking Time*, conceptually conveys time through notation. In two large rectangles, the artist drew letters and numbers. The left rectangle's notations resemble a code. The right rectangle reads more literally, with letters in each box spelling out incomplete poems or stories. Steir said at the time, "All the art I make is really about desire. I start with a mark, and the mark is a universal desire to speak or communicate."

Color/Language Participatory Etching (1979) by Iain Baxter, reads like a poem with its words re-arranged. Its title is an entreaty, literal as well as figurative. The artist said that the purchaser of the print can color in the block letters of the print. One could think of the participation as making a poem of one's own.

William T. Wiley made his large, colorful, autobiographical print, *Charmin' Billy*, in 2006. He brought to the Crown Point studio a Xerox of a photograph of himself as a young boy, and said he wanted to make a photogravure from it. "Blow it up as big as you can get it," he said at the time. The print is larger than life, with a smiling young Wiley sitting in a chair, wearing a cap, shorts and lace up white boots. Wiley frequently used words in his work— spoonerisms, puns, alliterations, and word plays. The words he penned throughout this print are tangential to the image itself: "weak link, leak wink;" "one sighs fits all." Wiley's iconic figurative hieroglyphics run parallel on the left side of the image.

About Words is on view in the Crown Point Gallery April 4 – June 2, 2023.
Gallery hours are Monday – Friday, 9 – 5 PM and on Saturdays by advance appointment.