

Crown Point Press

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Scratches, Spit and Vinegar curated by Ed Ruscha

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Make yourself small and imagine the beauty of skating across a copper plate, maybe with rusty skates, and seeing incisions that result from this action. You'll see there is a certain fragrance to a line cut with a tool. Some lines will be staccato flecks, all waiting to be filled with ink. Scrawling, scratching, drawing, dripping upon, and otherwise talking to a plate of metal illustrates the true nature of this medium.

So it's a kind of 3-part harmony: the artist, a metal plate and a device to make marks. All of these artists have clearly fallen for the seductive elements of this art form.

-Ed Ruscha

SAN FRANCISCO, CA - Ed Ruscha has been a fan of printmaking all his working life--he likes looking at prints, and he likes making them. Since 1982, he has made 39 etchings at Crown Point Press. In curating this exhibition, he has looked back into the press's history, and selected 32 prints by 17 artists.

Ruscha's title for the exhibition defines it. *Scratches* are marks that characterize an etching in its most traditional form: an artist scratches into a wax coating on a copper plate, and then etches the plate with acid. Robert Bechtle's works created in 1967 take this form, as do prints by Wayne Thiebaud made in 2011. Bechtle's are the earliest prints in the show and Thiebaud's the most recent.

Spit is the second word in the show's title. It comes from the name of a process used for Terry Fox's "Pendulum Spit Bite." Fox rigged a narrow hose into a pendulum hanging from the studio ceiling, filled the hose with acid and started it swinging. The dripping pattern was precisely captured on a copper plate prepared with spit, a wetting agent that keeps the acid from spreading.



Image: Wayne Thiebaud, *Sierra Cloud*, 2011.

Vinegar, the last title word, is a stand-in for *acid* and also it can imply an approach to making art that is straightforwardly tart, not sweet. A work subtitled "Future Futurism" by early New York graffiti artist Rammellzee shows tartness, as do two "Freehand Watermark Tracings" by influential music composer Steve Reich. Tom Marioni's "Walking Drawing" records his stride, and Julie Mehretu's "Unclosed" appears to be black and white but gains colors as you look. Robert Barry's two works at first look empty, but contain thought-provoking words. Prints by Barry Le Va, Günter Brus, Joel Fisher, Robert Hudson, Tim Rollins+K.O.S., Vito Acconci, and Chris Burden provide further intrigue.

For this exhibition, Ruscha not only chose the art, but also designed the installation. In the entryway, two red "Double Lunar Dogs" by Joan Jonas are accompanied by a small print by William T. Wiley. "Where wisdom and common sense will not pool," Wiley's etching announces, "There with his law stands the FOOL." It is a message from an artist, placed by the artist-curator at the entrance to this thought-provoking and beautiful show.

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