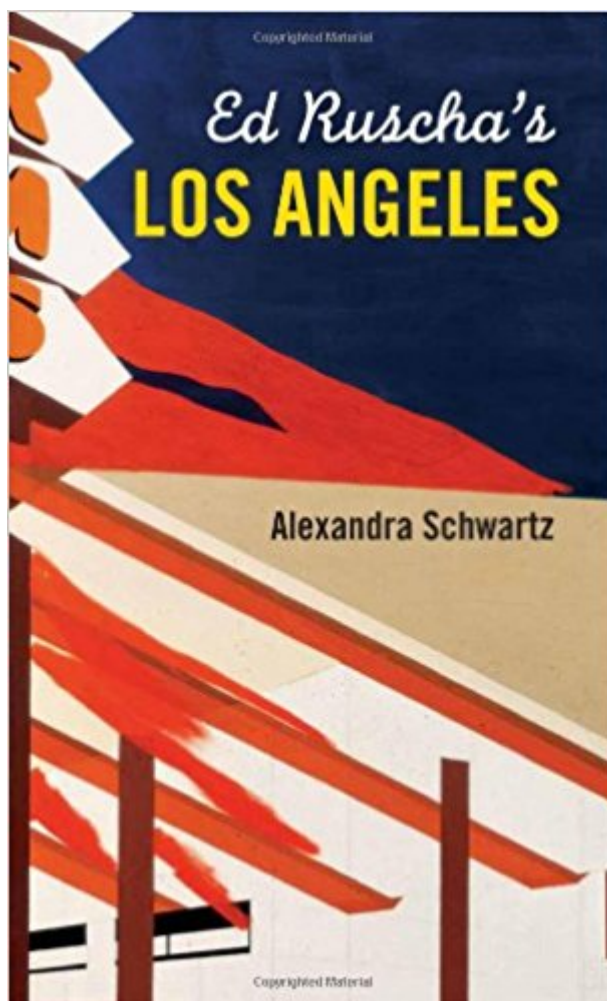


The book was found

Ed Ruscha's Los Angeles (MIT Press)



Synopsis

Ed Ruscha was born in Nebraska and raised in Oklahoma, but he belongs to Los Angeles in a way that few other artists do. Since the 1960s, Ruscha's iconic images of the cityscape and culture of Los Angeles -- freeway gas stations, parking lots, palm trees, motels, swimming pools, and billboards -- have both reflected and shaped popular perceptions of Hollywood and the city that surrounds it. In *Ed Ruscha's Los Angeles*, Alexandra Schwartz views Ruscha's groundbreaking early work as a window onto the radically shifting cultural and political landscape in which it was produced. Schwartz examines Ruscha's diverse body of work, including paintings, drawings, prints, photographs, books, and films, and discusses his relationship with other artists -- including John Altoon, Ed Kienholz, Billy Al Bengston, and Dennis Hopper, all of them associated with the famous Ferus Gallery -- with whom he sparked the movement known as West Coast pop. She also explores his links to the mainstream film industry, then evolving into the experimental New Hollywood of the late 1960s and early 1970s; his association with emerging discourse on L.A. architecture and urbanism; and his participation in the politics of the L.A. art world, where his presentation and self-marketing reflected contemporary attitudes toward gender, race, and class. Despite Ruscha's fame, this is the first comprehensive critical consideration of his art, and the first to consider it in the context of L.A.'s tumultuous 1960s and 1970s. It shows how Ruscha, borrowing from and critiquing the methods and myths of Hollywood, forged a new paradigm of the artist as a popular culture scribe -- a soothsayer for the entertainment age.

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Customer Reviews

If Schwartz's book of four essays has a unifying theme, it is to highlight the self-fashioning that has dominated both Hollywood and Los Angeles artists like Ruscha. The book ranges across pop art, film, masculinity, feminist art, Dennis Hopper's filmmaking, and Los Angeles's urban landscape (a.k.a. art's second city). Schwartz (who has edited a collection of Ruscha's writings) says that her book is the first critical study to foreground the place of Ruscha's work within the social and cultural history of 1960s Los Angeles, and, indeed, her essay on gender roles and gender fashioning reveals much about how artistic identities are forged in the City of Angels. As for Ruscha, Schwartz roots his curious brand of hyper-masculinity in anxiety about women—or, put somewhat differently, gender and sexuality. Given its critical sensibilities, the book may appeal more to academic readers than a general audience. Photos. (Apr.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Ed Ruscha's Los Angeles is particularly valuable in its exploration of Ruscha's relationship to Hollywood and influence on late 20th century architectural theory. It's a good read, and should be of interest to anyone concerned with the cultural history of Southern California. (Lynn Zelevansky, Henry J. Heinz II Director, Carnegie Museum of Art) Alexandra Schwartz's very articulate and very precise book on Ed Ruscha's life and work reveals a Ruscha overflowing with insight into the history of modern art and the masters of the avant-garde. The relationship between mass culture and underground culture is explored to great affect. Los Angeles freedom and the richness characterized by Ruscha's work make this book the definitive starting point for further appreciations of California Cool. (Catherine Grenier, Exhibition Director, Pompidou Center)

Ed Ruscha was part of the the scene surrounding arguably the most famous art gallery in the history of Los Angeles, the Ferus Gallery. A seminal gallery representing several artists in 1950s and 1960s Los Angeles that would provide the first fleeting fame for contemporary art in Los Angeles. Half a century later Ruscha is the best known of that early group of artists. Best known for his paintings of service stations, Ruscha was able to combine his artistic talent with an equal talent for self-promotion. The Ferus Gallery represented several young white, male artists determined to follow a direction distinct from what was happening in New York, cultivating a reputation as both artists and studs (the title of the gallery's last show). Ruscha was comfortable playing with this image and its excesses. A conservative city, Los Angeles largely ignored all contemporary art, leaving the Ferus boys a starring role a local art scene with few galleries or collectors. By the late

1970s the local establishment had taken note of these artists and equated them with contemporary excellence, a simplistic as well as sexist and racist attitude that did not go unnoticed by others in the LA art world. Ruscha and the other white male artists were now the establishment. The above has been told in numerous articles and books, particularly those published around the Pacific Standard Time exhibits and books sponsored by the Getty Foundation that studied the arts in post WWII Los Angeles. What distinguishes this book from several others is the thoughtful analysis of the various cultural and artistic worlds that influenced and were influenced by Ed Ruscha. This is thus an examination of a much larger spectrum of Los Angeles than just Ed Ruscha. An examination of the impact of directors and actors that changed Hollywood and the people and ideas that crossed over from the plastic arts, including Ruscha, to film is an example of the cross-fertilization between the arts examined in the book. The book reminds us that nothing occurs in a vacuum, and the Ferus world was created by young men moving to LA after WWII to discover their own particular visions. Shaped by the geography and weather in Los Angeles and the lack of dominant galleries and critics for modern art they were able to experiment with virtually anything, creating visions in tune with much that was going on in New York, but different. Over time these artists grew older and more established and others wanted to play in the world of LA art. This book sensitively examines the tensions that this caused, the difficulty Los Angeles and its cultural institutions had in accepting new concepts and artists. Highly recommended.

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