

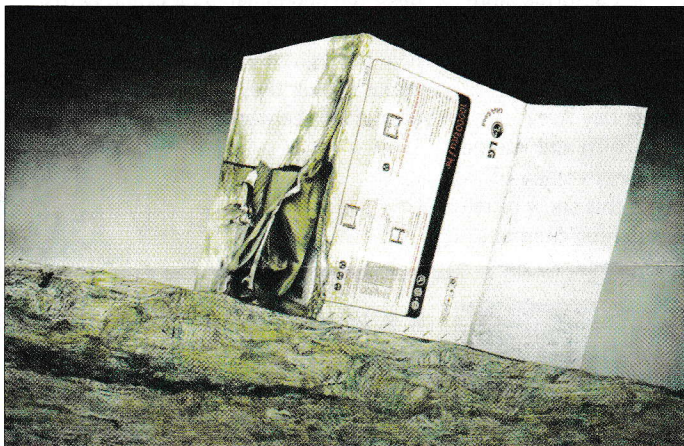
## Ed Ruscha

Gagosian

Beverly Hills, California

This highly anticipated show of paintings marked Ed Ruscha's first in his hometown of Los Angeles in 12 years. With his perfect pitch for language, he titled the exhibition "Psycho Spaghetti Westerns" in reference to films of mystery and mayhem as well as the Academy Awards ceremony that took place the week of the opening. Ruscha's ten decidedly odd yet fascinating new paintings derive from the monumental canvases of deteriorating industrial buildings that he painted for the 2005 Venice Biennale, a reinterpretation of Thomas Cole's 19th-century "Course of Empire" series, which itself depicts the decline of a landscape.

Ruscha's lifelong pursuit of the view from the windshield finds expression in these long, horizontal canvases, which are largely inspired by his drives into the high desert, where he has a home, and all that is left along the highway. He takes as his subject the residue of travelers, transients, and trash dumpers: discarded mattresses, tire treads, empty soda cans. The viewer is positioned roadside, face to face with the detritus of consumerist desires. In one telling composition, the road is pitched at an angle and an overturned



Ed Ruscha, *Psycho Spaghetti Western #6*, 2010, acrylic on canvas, 70" x 108".  
Gagosian.

cardboard container for an LG air conditioner confronts the viewer. The company's motto, "Life's Good," appears inverted, a reference that highlights the discrepancy between the rosy promises of consumerism and the bleak reality of its waste. Another vast canvas features discarded furniture, slabs of wood, old

blue jeans, and a broken lamp. Peeking from beneath the mess is a worn copy of *Popular Western* magazine, the same depicted in Ruscha's 1963 *Noise, Pencil, Broken Pencil, Cheap Western*.

Ruscha's compositions, pale colors, subdued paint finish, and attention to detail mark a departure from previous techniques. Astrigent while retaining the wry undertone that characterizes the Ruscha oeuvre, these paintings reflect his ongoing interest in Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*. It is a brilliant balancing act for the established artist, forging fresh territory for himself with paintings both astonishing and challenging—even if the road portrayed is far from promising.

—Hunter Drohojowska-Philp

## Sam Durant

Blum & Poe

Los Angeles

Known for his potent mix of politics, esthetics, and pedagogy, Sam Durant took on the world for an intriguing new suite of maps and globes. The result was a cogent interpretation of mapping as a political tool. Working with manufacturer Replegle, Durant created six large globes that use a familiar color-coded format to plot unexpected data. Suspended by floor-to-ceiling wires, each provided a 360-degree view of the world, charting such information as the top-ten places for tax evasion and money laundering, the highest per-capita concentrations of pigs and gold, or the correlation (almost none) between the locations of

prisons and art auction houses. Most interesting was a globe titled *The World in 2011: GDP and Total Corporate Assets (2011)*, which delineates a chilling new world order in which corporate "states" have superseded nations.

Also on view here was a series of wall-hung maps that Durant pointedly altered.

In *Proposal for America (2010)*, the South and North American continents hang upside down, each bearing the same quote from Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano:



Sam Durant, *The World in 2011: GDP and Total Corporate Assets, 2011*, acrylic, paper, steel cable, miscellaneous hardware, 20" diameter. Blum & Poe.

"History never ends, I hate to bother you." Close inspection reveals that the letters were cut out of the South American map, which was then used to stencil the quote in an ominous blood red on the map of North America. The gesture suggests that the economic and political imbalances between the two continents will eventually result in confrontation.

The most poignant piece was *Some Comparisons (2010)*, which juxtaposes two maps of the Middle East, one made by the U.S. government and the other created in Iran. The U.S. map of the Middle East is spare, focusing on features of obvious strategic interest: oil facilities, railways, and airstrips. By contrast, the Iranian map of the same area depicts a dense network of roads and small towns, reminding us that the region is far more than a resource to be exploited and fought over. Rather, it is, of course, a locale as complex and rich as our own.

—Sharon Mizota

## Karen LaMonte

Imago Galleries

Palm Desert, California

Best known for her life-size glass sculptures of flowing gowns, Karen LaMonte made a lyrical foray into the kimono form for this exhibition, titled "Floating World." Following a 2006 fellowship in Japan, LaMonte returned to her Prague studio with nearly 200 kimonos, and she began using diverse processes to