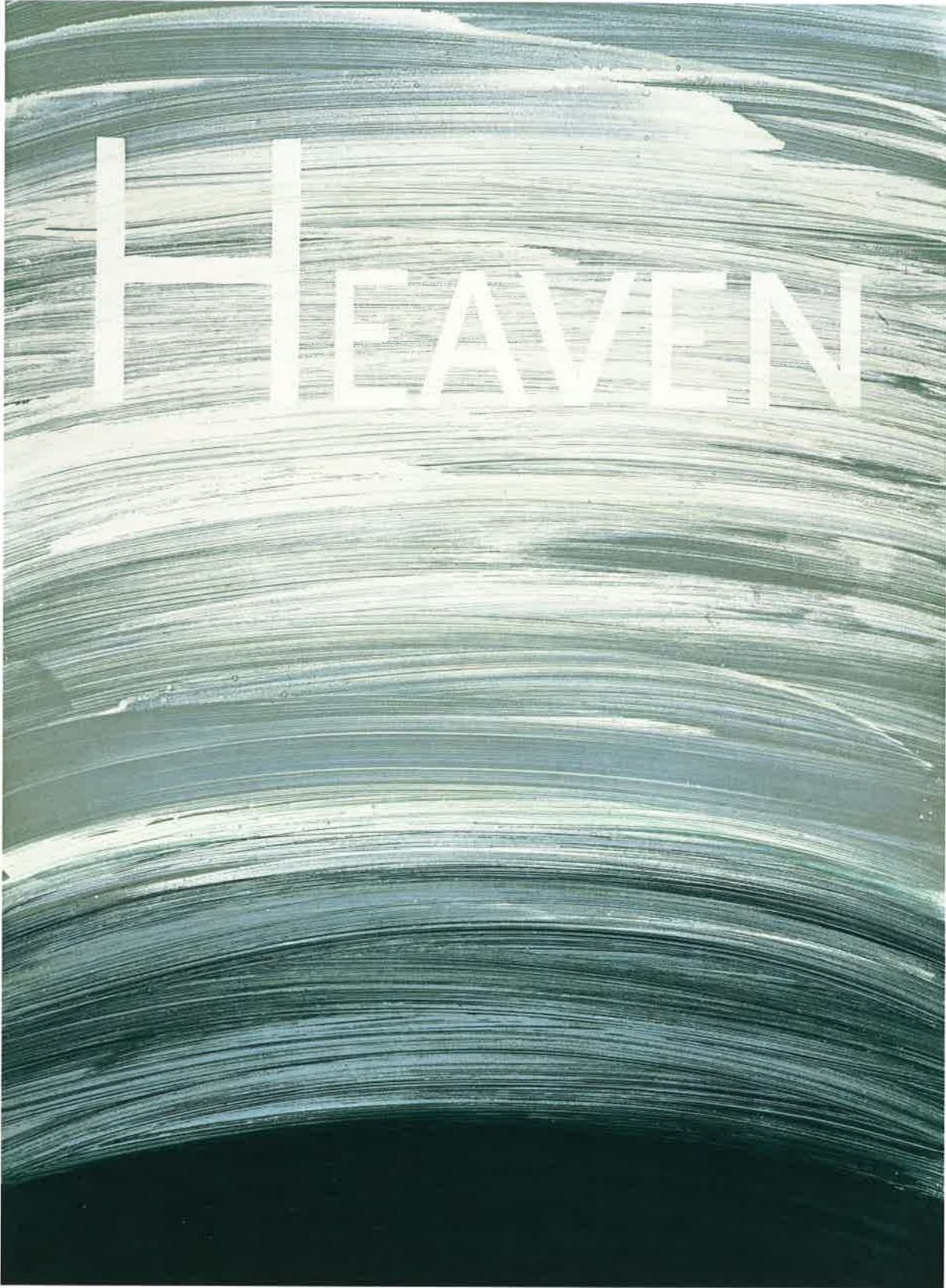


Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco

Acquisition of an Archive: The Graphic Works of Ed Ruscha





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By Karin Breuer, Curator

For more than thirty years, Edward Ruscha (b. Omaha, Nebraska, 1937) has been an influential figure in postwar American painting and one of contemporary art's most significant graphic artists. Ruscha's work in painting and printmaking was recognized with two major retrospectives in 2000: *Edward Ruscha: Editions 1959–1999*, organized by the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, and *Ed Ruscha*, an exhibition of paintings jointly organized by the Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, D.C., and the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford. In October 2000 the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco announced the acquisition of Ruscha's complete graphic archive: 325 editioned prints and approximately 800 working proofs (color proofs, trial proofs, cancellation proofs). Also included will be an impression of every future editioned print, photograph, or other editioned project. The generosity of Mrs. Paul L. Wattis funded this important acquisition.

The Edward Ruscha Graphic Arts Archive joins the Anderson Graphic Arts Collection (acquired in 1996) and the Crown Point Press Archive (acquired in 1991) to further establish the Fine Arts Museums as a major center for the display and study of contemporary American prints. This exhibition, featuring fifty-seven prints and ten working proofs from the three archives, demonstrates the depth, scope, and interconnectedness of these collections.

Ruscha (pronounced "rew-shay") first began making prints as a student in the late 1950s. He had come to Los Angeles in 1956 to study commercial art at Chouinard Art Institute (now Cal Arts). While there, he learned the fundamentals of layout, lettering, and illustration. He also took a printmaking class and apprenticed at Plantain Press, an art book publisher. These experiences proved influential in his future work, although not as a commercial artist. After working in design and layout for advertising agencies for a brief time, he left in 1961 determined to devote himself to making art.

Ruscha's first paintings as an exhibiting artist combined letterforms with familiar objects and elements of the western landscape. They were rendered in a flat, commercial style that immediately placed him in the forefront of 1960s pop art. The suggestion by art collector Audrey Sabol in 1966 that one of those early paintings, *Standard Station, Amarillo, Texas* (1963), would make a good image for a print that she would publish, formally introduced Ruscha to the world of collaborative printmaking. He soon discovered that the ideas used in one medium could be translated into the other. This successful adaptation is seen in some of his early screenprints such as *Standard Station* (1966) and *Adios* (1969), each of which contained an image that had been previously used in a painting. *Hollywood* (1968), one of his most famous prints from this period, had no painted antecedent and served as the inspiration for a 1977 painting and drawing.

Once acquainted with the world of edition printmaking, Ruscha found it hard to ignore the activities of innovative lithographic workshops (Tamarind, Gemini G.E.L., and Cirrus) that had recently been

established in Los Angeles. He made prints at all three workshops beginning in 1967 and into the mid-1970s, discovering that lithography enabled him to render in prints many of the same effects that he was achieving concurrently in his drawings and paintings. Prints from this period consisted of single words that could be seen as both subject and object, placed in monochromatic or abstract backgrounds. Letterforms ranged from straightforward typeface (*Evil*, 1973) to words seemingly constructed from ribbons (*Sin*, 1969) to letters apparently made from pools of liquid (*Anchovy*, 1969). The playful addition of elements such as olives and flies rendered life-size in some of these prints imparted an aura of the surreal to the imagery and further accentuated the words as physical entities. In prints from the late 1970s Ruscha returned to the western landscape—vast horizons punctuated by oil wells, telephone poles, or two people—in which the only words involved were those in his deadpan titles for them, such as *Let's Keep in Touch*, or *I've Never Seen Two People Looking Healthier*.

Ruscha's editions frequently involved experimentation with printmaking media. He utilized foodstuffs and organic materials such as cherry pie filling, daffodils, chocolate syrup, and axle grease in the series *News, Mews, Brews, Stews & Dues* (1970). In other prints, he substituted unusual supports such as sandpaper and wood veneer for paper (*Flies*, 1972). For his lithographs made in the 1980s in which letters, words, or archetypal images were rendered as soft-edged silhouettes against grainy, smoky backgrounds (*Ship*, 1986, and *Coyote*, 1989), Ruscha developed a method to attain the soft edges by airbrushing automotive lacquer directly onto lithographic plates.

In those "silhouette prints" of the 1980s, concurrent with a group of "silhouette paintings," Ruscha temporarily abandoned language, choosing instead to introduce ideas about memory and implied narrative. He did this by utilizing a repertoire of clichéd images such as a howling coyote, a masted ship in full sail, an hourglass, and a hunting dog. The images recalled the unfocused, slightly blurred appearance of nineteenth-century photographs and evoked a romantic sense of nostalgia.

Language and words have begun to appear again in Ruscha's most recent prints since 1998 in the form of gritty, flat, monochromatic maps of Los Angeles city streets (*Street Meets Avenue*, 2000). He has also returned to a series of Los Angeles parking lots and swimming pools with large-scale photographs that were the subjects of his groundbreaking books of the 1960s. Constantly inventive, Ruscha continues to work with intriguing combinations of picture and language in the editioned work that has become integral and essential to his art.



Ed Ruscha in his studio, 1997. Photograph: Leo Holub



Anchovy, 1969

Exhibition Checklist

Unless otherwise noted, all works are from the Edward Ruscha Graphic Arts Archive, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Museum purchase, Mrs. Paul L. Wattis Fund. They are listed in chronological order with sheet measurements in inches, height preceding width.

"E." numbers refer to Siri Engberg, *Edward Ruscha Editions 1959–1999. Catalogue Raisonné* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1999).

Standard Station, 1966

Color screenprint, E. 5, 22 5/8 x 40 in.
Printed by Art Krebs, Los Angeles
Published by Audrey Sabol, Villanova, Pennsylvania
2000.131.5.1

Hollywood, 1968

Color screenprint, E. 7, 17 1/2 x 44 7/16 in.
Printed and published by the artist
2000.131.7.1

Mocha Standard, 1969

Color screenprint, E. 30, 24 7/8 x 40 in.
Printed by Jean Milant and Daniel Socha at Ruscha's Hollywood studio
Published by the artist
Museum purchase, Hamilton-Wells Fund
1977.1.323

Cheese Mold Standard with Olive, 1969

Color screenprint, E. 31, 25 3/4 x 40 1/8 in.
Printed by Jean Milant and Daniel Socha at Ruscha's Hollywood studio
Published by the artist
2000.131.31.1

Double Standard, 1969

Collaboration with Mason Williams
Color screenprint on paper, E. 32, 25 3/4 x 40 in.
Printed by Jean Milant and Daniel Socha at Ruscha's Hollywood studio
Published by the artist
2000.131.32.1

Sin, 1969

Color lithograph, E. 22, 14 x 15 1/4 in.
Printed by Daniel Socha
Published by Tamarind Lithography Workshop, Los Angeles
2000.131.22.1

Two color trial proofs and a cancellation proof for **Sin** are exhibited to demonstrate Ruscha's artistic process in lithography.

Anchovy, 1969

Color lithograph, E. 29, 19 x 28 in.
Printed by Serge Lozingot
Published by Tamarind Lithography Workshop, Los Angeles
2000.131.29.1

News, from the portfolio **News, Mews, Brews, Stews & Dues**, 1970

Color screenprint printed with black currant-pie filling and red salmon roe, E. 34, 25 x 31 in.
Printed by Lyndon Haywood at Alecto Studios, London
Published by Editions Alecto, London
2000.131.34.1

Mews, from the portfolio **News, Mews, Brews, Stews & Dues**, 1970

Color screenprint printed with Bolognese sauce, black currant-pie filling, and raw egg, E. 35, 23 x 31 in.
Printed by Lyndon Haywood at Alecto Studios, London
Published by Editions Alecto, London
2000.131.34.2

Pews, from the portfolio **News, Mews, Brews, Stews & Dues**, 1970

Color screenprint printed with Hershey's chocolate-flavor syrup, Camp coffee, chicory essence, and squid ink, E. 36, 23 x 31 in.
Printed by Lyndon Haywood at Alecto Studios, London
Published by Editions Alecto, London
2000.131.34.3

Brews, from the portfolio **News, Mews, Brews, Stews & Dues**

Color screenprint printed with axle grease and caviar, E. 37, 23 x 31 in.
Printed by Lyndon Haywood at Alecto Studios, London
Published by Editions Alecto, London
2000.131.34.4

Stews, from the portfolio **News, Mews, Brews, Stews & Dues**, 1970

Color screenprint printed with crushed baked beans, caviar, fresh strawberries, cherry-pie filling, mango chutney, tomato paste, crushed daffodils, crushed tulips, and leaves, E. 38, 23 x 31 in.
Printed by Lyndon Haywood at Alecto Studios, London
Published by Editions Alecto, London
2001.131.34.5

Dues, from the portfolio **News, Mews, Brews, Stews & Dues**, 1970

Color screenprint printed with Branston pickle, E. 39, 23 x 31 in.
Printed by Lyndon Haywood at Alecto Studios, London
Published by Editions Alecto, London
2000.131.34.6

Flies, from the portfolio **Insects**, 1972

Color screenprint on paper-backed wood veneer, E. 60, 19 7/8 x 29 11/16 in.
Printed by Adolf Rischner at Styria Studio, New York
Published by Multiples, Inc., New York
2000.131.55.1

Evil, 1973

Color screenprint on wood-grain veneer, E. 70, 19 7/8 x 29 11/16 in.
Printed by Jane Aman, with Jean Milant
Published by Cirrus Editions, Los Angeles
2000.131.60.1



News, 1970



Evil, 1973

Sweets, Meats, Sheets, from the *Tropical Fish Series*, 1975

Screenprint with lacquer overprint, E. 83, 32 3/4 x 25 3/4 in.
 Printed by Robert Knisel, with John Roberts; collaboration and supervision by Jeff Wasserman
 Published by Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles
 2000.131.72

Excuse Me, I Didn't Mean to Interrupt, from the portfolio *Tamarind: Suite Fifteen*, 1975

Color lithograph, E. 89, 30 x 22 in.
 Printed by Stephen Britko
 Published by Tamarind Institute, Albuquerque
 2000.131.77.1

Exploding Cheese, from the series *Various Cheeses*, 1976

Color lithograph, E. 92, 14 7/8 x 20 1/2 in.
 Printed by Charly Ritt and Jim Webb
 Published by Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles
 2000.131.80

Cheese Crescent, from the series *Various Cheeses*, 1976

Color lithograph, E. 95, 14 7/8 x 20 1/2 in.
 Printed by Anthony Zepeda, Dan Freeman, Charly Ritt, and Jim Webb
 Published by Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles
 2000.131.83

Let's Keep in Touch, 1978

Color screenprint, E. 99, 19 x 50 1/2 in.
 Printed by Jeff Wasserman, Bob Dressen, and Bob Knisel at Wasserman Silkscreen Co., Santa Monica
 Published by Multiples, Inc., New York
 2000.131.87.1

I've Never Seen Two People Looking Healthier, 1978

Color screenprint, E. 100, 19 x 50 in.
 Printed by Jeff Wasserman, Bob Dressen, and Bob Knisel at Wasserman Silkscreen Co., Santa Monica
 Published by Multiples, Inc., New York
 2000.131.88.1

It's Recreational, from the *World Series*, 1982

Color lithograph, E. 118, 25 x 34 in.
 Printed by Alan Holoubek and Yasutoshi Ishibashi with Serge Lozingot
 Published by Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles
 2000.131.106

Girls, from the *World Series*, 1982

Color lithograph, E. 119, 25 x 34 in.
 Printed by Yasutoshi Ishibashi, Krystine Graziano, and Anthony Zepeda
 Published by Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles
 2000.131.107

51 % Angel/49 % Devil, 1984

Color lithograph, E. 140, 22 3/8 x 30 in.
 Printed by Ed Hamilton, Hollywood
 Published by the artist
 2000.131.128.1

Ship, 1986

Lithograph, E. 145, 45 x 34 in.
 Printed by Lynne D. Allen and Tom Pruitt
 Published by Tamarind Institute, Albuquerque
 2000.131.133.1

Western Vertical, 1986

Color lithograph, E. 147, 53 3/4 x 36 1/2 in.
 Printed by Richard Hammond and Francesco Siqueiros with Jean Milant
 Published by Cirrus Editions, Los Angeles
 2000.131.135

Heaven, 1988

Color soap-ground aquatint, E. 157, 54 1/16 x 40 3/16 in.
 Printed by Renée Bott, Mark Callen, and Daria Sywulak
 Published by Crown Point Press, San Francisco
 Crown Point Press Archive, gift of Crown Point Press
 1991.28.1264

Hell, 1988

Color soap-ground aquatint, E. 158, 54 x 40 1/4 in.
 Printed by Renée Bott, Mark Callen, and Daria Sywulak
 Published by Crown Point Press, San Francisco
 Crown Point Press Archive, gift of Crown Point Press
 1991.28.1265

Coyote, 1989

Lithograph, E. 169, 36 x 27 in.
 Printed by Ed Hamilton, Hollywood
 Published by the artist
 2000.131.151.1

That Is Right, 1989

Portfolio of twelve color lithographs, E. 173–184, each 9 x 11 in.
 Printed by Ed Hamilton at the Hamilton Press, Venice, California
 Published by the artist
 2001.131.155.1-12

OK (State 1), 1990

Color lithograph, E. 197, 27 x 36 in.
 Printed by Ed Hamilton, Hollywood
 Published by the artist
 2001.131.159.1

A selection of three color trial proofs for *OK (State 1)* is exhibited to demonstrate Ruscha's investigations of various colors schemes for the image before he arrived at a final version.

Now, 1990

Color lithograph, E. 201, 60 1/16 x 40 in.
 Printed by Francesco Siqueiros and Robert Dansby with Jean Milant
 Published by Cirrus Editions, Los Angeles
 2000.131.163.1



51% Angel/49% Devil, 1984

**An Anderson Gallery of Contemporary Graphic Art
exhibition in Gallery One**

**California Palace of the Legion of Honor
12 May – 7 October 2001**

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Dog, 1995

Mixografia technique, E. 222, 27 1/4 x 38 1/2 in.
Printed by Luis Remba
Published by the Mixografia Workshop,
Los Angeles
Anderson Graphic Arts Collection, Museum
Purchase, Gift of Mrs. Gunther R. Detert,
Art Trust Fund for Prints and Drawings, Funds
in memory of Suzanne Reger, Dr. Saliga Reger,
Katharine Hanrahan, Jenicka Rosekrans, Allen
Swayze, Edward C. "Chuck" Bassett, Pat Steger,
John Langley Howard, Hilda Mary "Johnny"
Danforth, Dorothy Munn, and Other Memorial
Funds
2000.28

Sayings from Mark Twain's Pudd'nhead Wilson,
1995

Bound book of ten color lithographs, E. 226–235,
19 1/8 x 15 1/2 x 3/4 in.
Printed by Glenn Brill and Veda Ozelle;
book design by Hank Hine
Published by Greve/Hine, Paris and San
Francisco
2000.131.183.13

A preparatory drawing for one of the lithographs
is exhibited.

Sunliner #7, from the series **Sunliners**,
1995–1996

Color aquatint and etching, E. 243, 17 x 13 in.
Printed by Aldo Crommelynck at Atelier
Crommelynck, Paris
Published by Pace Editions, New York
2000.131.191.1

Selected working proofs for **Sunliner #7** are
exhibited to demonstrate Ruscha's artistic
process in etching and aquatint.

Pool #2, from the series **Pools**, 1968/1997

Color photograph, E.262, 18 9/16 x 18 9/16 in.
Printed at Pacific Light Impressions, Vancouver
Published by Patrick Painter Editions, Vancouver
and Hong Kong
2000.131.210

Pool #3, from the series **Pools**, 1968/1997

Color photograph, E.263, 18 13/16 x 18 1/4 in.
Printed at Pacific Light Impressions, Vancouver
Published by Patrick Painter Editions, Vancouver
and Hong Kong
2000.131.211

Pool #4, from the series **Pools**, 1968/1997

Color photograph, E.264, 18 5/8 x 18 5/8 in.
Printed at Pacific Light Impressions, Vancouver
Published by Patrick Painter Editions, Vancouver
and Hong Kong
2000.131.212

Pool #7, from the series **Pools**, 1968/1997

Color photograph, E.267, 18 1/2 x 18 1/2 in.
Printed at Pacific Light Impressions, Vancouver
Published by Patrick Painter Editions, Vancouver
and Hong Kong
2000.131.215

The End #3, 1998

Hologram printed with silver halide black-and-
white film, laminated to glass with protective film,
E. M67, 11 x 14 in.
Printed at C Project, Miami Beach, Florida
Published by C Project
2000.131.226.3

The End #4, 1998

Hologram printed with silver halide black-and-
white film, laminated to glass with protective film,
E. M68, 11 x 14 in.
Printed at C Project, Miami Beach, Florida
Published by C Project
2000.131.226.4

5000 W. Carling Way, from the series **Parking
Lots**, 1967/1999

Gelatin silver print, E. 283, 15 1/2 x 15 1/2 in.
Printed at Pacific Light Impressions, Ltd.,
Vancouver
Published by Patrick Painter Editions, Vancouver
and Hong Kong
2000.131.228.5

Dodgers Stadium, 1000 Elysian Park Ave.,

from the series **Parking Lots**, 1967/1999
Gelatin silver print, E. 291, 15 1/2 x 15 1/2 in.
Printed at Pacific Light Impressions, Ltd.,
Vancouver
Published by Patrick Painter Editions,
Vancouver and Hong Kong
2000.131.228.13

Gilmore Drive-In Theater, 6201 W. 3rd St.,

from the series **Parking Lots**, 1967/1999
Gelatin silver print, E. 294, 15 1/2 x 15 1/2 in.
Printed at Pacific Light Impressions, Ltd.,
Vancouver
Published by Patrick Painter Editions,
Vancouver and Hong Kong
2000.131.228.16

**State Board of Equalization, 14601 Sherman
Way, Van Nuys** from the series **Parking Lots**,
1967/1999

Gelatin silver print, E. 297, 15 1/2 x 15 1/2 in.
Printed at Pacific Light Impressions, Ltd.,
Vancouver
Published by Patrick Painter Editions,
Vancouver and Hong Kong
2000.131.228.19

Street Meets Avenue, 2000

Color lithograph, not in E., 22 1/4 x 30 1/4 in.
Printed by Ed Hamilton and Pat Squires at
Hamilton Press, Venice, California
Published by eyestorm.com Ltd.
2000.131.235

Cover: **Standard Station**, 1966

Back Cover:

(top) **Dog**, 1995

(bottom) **Street Meets Avenue**, 2000

Inside left: **Heaven**, 1988

Inside right: **Hell**, 1988

