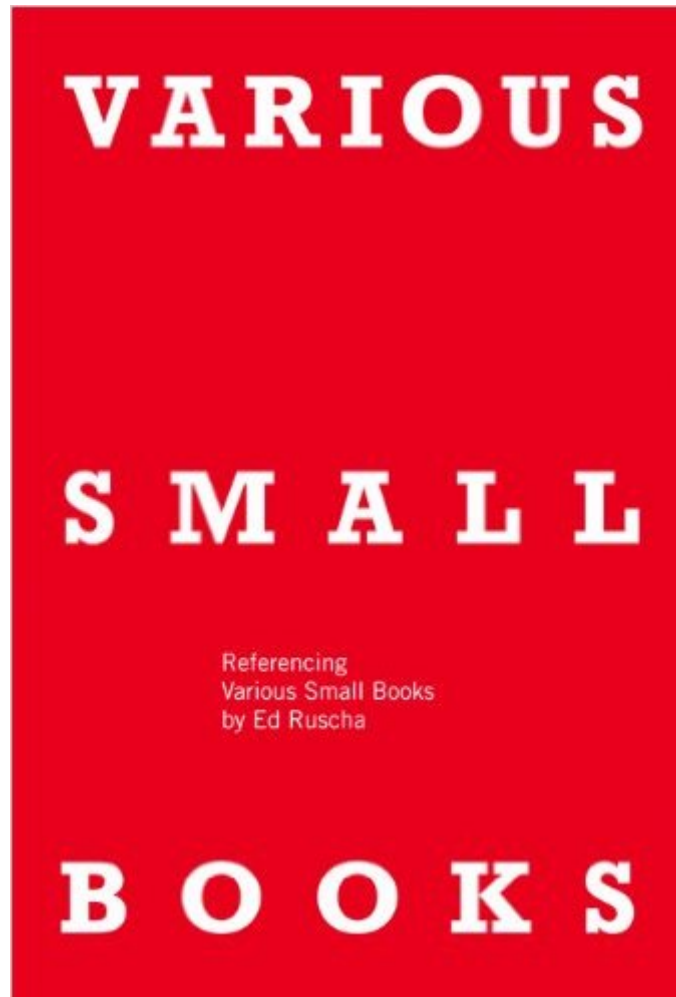


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# **VARIOUS SMALL BOOKS: Referencing Various Small Books By Ed Ruscha (MIT Press)**



## Synopsis

In the 1960s and 1970s, the artist Ed Ruscha created a series of small photo-conceptual artist's books, among them *Twentysix Gas Stations*, *Various Small Fires*, *Every Building on the Sunset Strip*, *Thirtyfour Parking Lots*, *Real Estate Opportunities*, and *A Few Palm Trees*. Featuring mundane subjects photographed prosaically, with idiosyncratically deadpan titles, these "small books" were sought after, collected, and loved by Ruscha's fans and fellow artists. Over the past thirty years, close to 100 other small books that appropriated or paid homage to Ruscha's have appeared throughout the world. This book collects ninety-one of these projects, showcasing the cover and sample layouts from each along with a description of the work. It also includes selections from Ruscha's books and an appendix listing all known Ruscha book tributes. These small books revisit, imitate, honor, and parody Ruscha in form, content, and title. Some rephotograph his subjects: *Thirtyfour Parking Lots*, *Forty Years Later*. Some offer a humorous variation: *Various Unbaked Cookies* (which concludes, as did Ruscha's *Various Small Fires*, with a glass of milk), *Twentynine Palms* (twenty-nine photographs of palm-readers' signs). Some say something different: *None of the Buildings on Sunset Strip*. Some reach for a connection with Ruscha himself: *17 Parked Cars in Various Parking Lots Along Pacific Coast Highway Between My House and Ed Ruscha's*. With his books, Ruscha expanded the artist's field of permissible subjects, approaches, and methods. With *VARIOUS SMALL BOOKS*, various artists pay tribute to Ed Ruscha and extend the legacy of his books.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

What a fascinating survey of creativity inspired by Ed Ruscha's photo books from a few decades ago. His 7 by 5.5 inch titles have several almost direct copies here, the famous 1963 'Twentysix gasoline stations' inspired the same title, size and cover design from Michalis Pichler in 2009 with photos of Total stations in Germany, Jeff Brouws, in 1992 and Eric Tabuchi, in 2009 modified the title to 'Twentysix abandoned gasoline stations', though Tabuchi's was a set of boxed postcards. The book's title says 'small' but some are anything but: Mark Ruwedel's 'One thousand two hundred twelve palms' is 11.25 by 14.25 inches and Joachim Koester's 2007 'Occupied plots, abandoned futures' is no more than twelve framed prints on a gallery wall (one of two titles that are not books). I thought it was wonderful that this collection of ninety-one titles carries on the sense of fun Ruscha put into his originals. His 1970 'Babycakes' probably inspired Marcella Hackbardt's 2010 'Various unbaked cookies' and Boehme and Baskauskas 'Various blank pages' is just that: sixty-pages of photos of a blank page book. Incidentally, many of the titles imitate Ruscha's use of Rockwell, the typeface used on his covers. The book is divided into seven dated sections starting in 1954 with a Japanese title revealing the Ginza in a very similar format to Ruscha's 'Every building on Sunset Strip'. Most of the titles are post 2000 and self-published in very limited or open editions. I assume they are produced by print-on-demand techniques which is obviously ideal for this type of small-run photobooks. Editor Jeff Brouws did a nice job designing the pages (and printed with a 175 screen) though I would have appreciated an index. 'Various small books' is a delightful and intriguing look back at the continuing influence of Ed Ruscha on photography. My only frustration is that I only have one of these marvellous books!

Reading this book is thoroughly enjoyable. Apparently if you have the right attitude, nothing can be overlooked. These 'small books' show that even the most mundane things are rich sources of laughter, depression, ridicule, and mockery. Can reading really be this much fun? And I'm not even mentioning the textual commentary. The pictures themselves sustain these projects. The bottom line for me at least is to apply what I've learned by examining these 'small books' and using them as examples ( in some cases it may not be appropriate) for high school students struggling with English literacy. I'm planning to take the concept and demand that each student product one of their own 'small books' as an end-of-the-semester project. Imagine how impressed their parents will be when they introduce their own child as the author of Fifteen Stray Cats in My Neighborhood.

For those who enjoy artist books, Ed Ruscha or just original ideas of familiar things, this is a very

nice catalogue. The pictures and descriptions are very helpful and the artists' insights into their creative processes is enlightening. It is a collectible catalogue and an artist book in itself.

Ed Ruscha's various books revolutionised the creation of artist books. In the following years a significant number of people from amateurs to well known artists have created their own Ruscha derived works. Many of these books were produced in small runs and sadly like Ruscha's own works have, in recent years, become highly collectible. This volume details ~40 of the better known examples. I would highly recommend this to those with an interest in the contemporary artists book, or artists interested in issues of appropriation/seriality, and of course people obsessed with Ruscha.

Photobibliomania is a blessing and a curse to me, and Ed Ruscha may have been one of the instigators of the rags to riches story of photobooks, the scoundrel!! I can recall when his books were remaindered and now they are like gold bars. It has been amusing and edifying to watch a whole generation of artists "respond" to Ruscha, and this book does a good job of summarizing, although an e-database would do better, as new books come out weekly now. I got one today!

This book provided photos from more than one of his books. It inspired me to look closer at the everyday world. I recommend it.

Its okay

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